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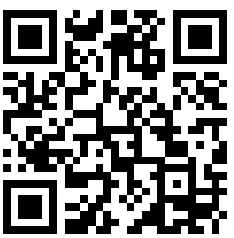

THE COLONNADES.

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THE COLONNADES:

A POEM,

By BENJAMIN BLOOD.

AUTHOR'S PRIVATE EDITION.
Amsterdam, N. Y., 1868.

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THE COLONNADES.

Welcome as Christ into his father's house,
To hands divine soothing the sobbing locks
Which the dews drenched upon Judean hills,
Should bard be to the world. He too redeems.
And those strong powers that spin the heavens around
Shall sometimes break him for the bread of life.
He makes by breaking; he advances backward—
Climbs downward into failures for success.
Man's justice pays him not. Of acrobats
Ye ask not manners,—let your lawyers pass
For cunning, three days' pleaders for their wind,—
See in the galleries many painted heads
Whose greatness was the favor of their times—
Great for it filled great place, or thought it did,
And be content; they had some lucky knack,
Praiseworthy till too many such shall be—
Bricks of the state house building. But the bard,
This world's translator, and of other worlds
Projector in the heavens behind the eye,
These cannot measure; for these cannot see

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In words the flower of universal growth,—
They have not mastered this—the Word is truth,—
They do not see the fool confute himself,
Nor know the great things that the man might do
Who can do these the least, the most remote:
Put rainbows into bubbles, catch the hum
Of life at the third bottle, and encomb
In his rightlinéd cells this odorous sap,
The sweet of nature. 'Tis for the men-kings
Who know the frailties of this mortal stuff,
Not in yew glooms and graveyards of the world
To poise his paper skull and sigh 'poor Yorick!'
But in his life to pay his subtle wants,
And wear their purple in the jester's service.

Welcome?—Ah! never did the languid waves
Leap for the moon's kiss, children for a tale
Of winter night, as will the hungry lands
To greet a poet now. The pope himself
Shall swing his cap for joy. The sacred bells
That only tumble in the throes of empire
Shall wind the tidings 'round their iron tongues
'Till their jaws ache. And where the organ droned
With scarce a sigh to heave its leathern lungs,
The bellows-men shall sweat, while fluctuant notes
That seek the fearful pitch of the new song
Float palpitating up the mellow tube,
'Till, gaining grandeur from the yearning theme,
They wildly mingle in the outer air,
And jar the building in the shuddering charge
Of thund'rous volleys rolling to the gods.

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As on the morning of the Lord's birth day
Men see the untrodden snow that all the night
Was softly falling into life's vile ways,
So clean, so Christ-like, sweetening human thoughts,
And mantling nature from the wrath to come, —
Go forth with greetings, glad news, shaking hands,
And say they knew it, long expected it,
And lo, it comes at last!—their hearts like lambs
Shall gambol in the sunshine, full of joy
To think the hour has come when it is great
To be religious, pleasant, merciful,—
To think he comes, defender of the faith,
Who puts the strength of greatness into good,—
No seer, no oracle, but brother plain,
The spokesman of the soul, the sea, the roses,
Whose wrath is sweeter charity than bread,
Whose laughter is thanksgiving to the gods,
Whose wit says blessing to the holiest feast,
The prince of nature, on whose brow the stars
Forecast their orbits centuries to come,
Titan of later date, whose blooded arms
Can shoulder aching Atlas and his load.

Martyrs have crowns for suffering, and the poor
The wandering, reckless and unfortunate
Gain patience if not wisdom. E'en so he,
Whose needs have eaten out of every dish,
Slept in all beds, and rider been and horse,
Hath by fruition compassed many lives.
So Christ plebeian tasted every death

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Of human nature. So the child of art,
Or more impressible or wider strayed,
Cries with the tears of universal man.

Hast thou a weakness—ah! he feels it now;
Or hast thou strength, strike here upon the breast,—
For he is one whose bones are hard to break.
His hair is thick, the children catch in it,
And swing and dance as from a bending elm.

He cannot house him with your honest folk.
He laughs too quick; he eats and drinks too free;
And when he stretches him, his rambling limbs
Push o'er the altars of their play-house gods.

Art thou a madman, he shall prove thy tale.
All was too visible; he too was there.

Know'st thou that heavy hic-cup of the heart
That tells how long since trouble touched the world,
Since oldest ancients call the heart the soul,
Ah, turn aside with him, and know thy friend.

Hast thou known grief, come see his little things,
Picked up when his dear children wandered off
And laid them weary down in the green vales,—
And gone they have, and left these little shoes
And toys behind them, and ah me! where are they?
Know ye where your's went? chance they strayed together.
Let's dry our eyes, and look thro' the dark woods.

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Failed hast thou, or succeeded,—hast thou striven,
Loved, hated, braved, regretted, envied, longed —
He is the monster consciousness of life.

Good master Critic, spare your venom here.
Pretender, egotist, he is that proud
He holds his follies sacred. His fond art
Is but a shadow of the thought he feels:
'Tis but a hatchet unto Hercules.
He looks men in the face and says these things.
His blood is fresh as Adam's. The proud sun
Hath lost no lustre, nor the court of death
Hath lustre gained, nor miracle grown old.
And he must sing as on the desert hills
'Mid leagues of wilderness unknown to fame,
With none to listen, the hot lion roars,—
As behemoth upflouts the solid floods
To spray the tritons conching the rough main.

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I.

I dreamed of Charon, and his phantom craft:
Not him, decrepit churl whom poets feign,
A murky fright that flits the straits of death
Like a lost bat between the two worlds' walls,
While o'er the passenger Time's quickening vans
Kindle a dream of Hell in his cold brain;
His eye was mellow as a lake at evening;
And in the foreground of the world to come
He stood, a shadow truly, with his forehead
And sombre cheeks in folded shadows swathed,
But 'round his muffled brow a planet flare
Told his divine original—a son
Of Agelastus—him that never smiles.

This might be butterfly to that old grub
To whom bright Socrates, a trifle flushed
With the strong hemlock—with his dexter foot
Bending the laboring oar to speed the trip,
Cried "Man and boy, when was it, my good friend,
That thou last washed thyself?"—and stared him so,
The hard-earned penny from his gaping teeth
The boatman dropped 'long side;—whereat he swore
By all the gold in Pluto's coffers locked,
(Whereto this ferriage tributary passed),
Come such another he would toll no more.

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Now this remembering, by this world I swear
Whose gritty fibre ground my heel as yet,
"Man pays no obolus to enter life,
And none should pay for exit." Hereupon
Cried Charon, "Lo, he cometh!"—At the words,
So stout a labor took the pregnant world,
And such a racket went around the skies,
As Thor's old maul, that bangs the welkin's rim,
Had tried its temper on the jowl of Death, —
Or Vulcan's sledge, new handled to the age,
Had junked the handbolts old, Power's precepts once,
To slug the new columbiads of Jove.
A burst of fire that turned the night to pitch
Quaffed off the Phlegethon in single gulp,
And the smoke rolled away. Then wide around
Toward mine own fields I saw the cheery glow
Of lambent heavens in mellow, far concave,
Where Night imperial in her large state gems
Weltered the royal purple o'er the world;
But forward, lo! a tunnel dark and huge
Was all the flickering heaven for leagues and leagues.
Then Charon slowly, and with head deferred,
As if mankind grew nearer to the gods:
"Say on, fair mortal—tell thy mission here."
My answer met him: I must cross and back.
I am a rover whose deep-water keel
Frets on the shallows of the babbling stream,—
Or bird misprisoned from his nature's bent,
Whose fierce ambition cocks at such a pitch
He should outfly the loftiest thoughted lark
That sings his native heavens, or break his neck.

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Then Charon lifted his immortal eyes:
"And are we cheerful, in the acorn cup
To read the knots of the 'admiral's clammy keel,
In the old future?—In thy countenance
The story of the universe is told.—
Above yon cloudy headland shines a star
For thee and thine: to us, memorial
Of one long lost, forgot of her old peers:
And ages yet these orphan beams shall bring
Her death-glance traveling to man's charmed eye.—
We moor eternity both fore and aft."

So spake he dreamily: and after, I:

The air is sickening! List the murmuring shore!
As on the eve of tribulous event,
Some conflict of the elements, the birds
Droop their gay tails, and still their clamorous beaks,
The sons of song are mute. What may it mean?
The actors play, the painters paint at will,—
The bards are gagged; they do not strike the pitch.
They pass by tolerance, not by fear or love;
Men scorn them, and there's beauty in their scorn.
Men hate them, and their wrath is poetry,
Or poet comes not yet.—Things shake their ears;
There comes a hurricane to clear the air;
And lo, our laureate, in his smoking cap
And broidered double-gown, an inference weaves
Spun from the faint remembrance of the shade
A cobweb furnished to a fairy dream,
And we may call it cable,—yea, applaud,

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As some chained elephant should lift a pin,—
One that in pictures of a stormy time
Should make the scared trees whiten, and their roots
Grasp the dear earth, feeling his trunk entwine,
'Till men should stand from under.

One must come
Whose shout shall ask no hush of Academe
To gape its welcome, and relieve his grace.
As belted manhood in the blare of day
Forgets his last night's love, and through the bruit
And dust of daylight shoves the angry crowd,
His iron words shall pound these stumbling blocks
Like madding hammers, till the granite hot
Shall blush inscriptions in the elder hand
That settled the foundation of the world.
Then truths like lamb's wrath o'er a ravenous race,
Or martyr tears that all Heaven's thunders back,
Shall down the ages, rugged and indued,
As they were mountains, plucked up by the hair,
And by the Titans thrown. Yet where is he?

O! for a sunrise bard, with hand like his
Who felt these longings first,—or haply his
Who curved the eyelids of the Sphinx,—or his—
Cheops, Cephrenes, or whate'er his name,
Who dug the cellars of the pyramids
Beneath low-thunder-mark,—an open soul
With longings after theirs,—a child of art,
All faith and love, to build that house of God
Where guests that gather in this dawning day

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Shall greet a Christian in the man Christ-like.—
Is it for me to do?—or let man do it,
I'll take him by the hand as elder brother,
Tell him, 'tis his, 'twas mine, and many a man's
Who lived and died possest—too dull, too weak,
Without the patient thought and lonesome will
Which are the bone of art, yet ever longed
To fill this sickening emptiness of life,
To utter this dumb language of the gods—
Idols and shrines and fanes and monuments,
In words, which outlast all.—In desert born
Of times that knew no culture—Nature's face
Looking up dumbly and beseechingly,
I might have given her language. It is late.
Men's eyes grow watery in the glare of truth,
And seek for shadows and art-tinted lights.

And slowly answered Charon "It is late:
Yet thou too art an ancient."

Warmed with pride
In this significance, my hope o'erflowed:
Oh, shall it ever be again—the joy
That greeted the young bard when books were few,
And title-pages were like gates of heaven?
How shone the hills of Greece when Homer sung!
How swelled the tulip night with loftier bloom,
And poured serener dreams, o'er Maro's lay!
E'en thou my Byron of the lonesome string,
Shall bard e'er touch the world again as thou,
The young, the beautiful?

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O! where was fame
In my flushed boyhood when I was, like thee,
Soft-eyed and open-necked to the wild wind,
In love with mine own motions, the smooth chill
Of mine own flowing fibre,—e'er my steps
Forgot the barefoot feel of the clay world?
Fame had been welcome then!—I wooed and lost.
Across my barren and unheeded moors
Swept on the white skirts of an alien Moon,
Spangled with old regalia strange to me.
A child could fright me after!—Manhood came,
Nor yet the trumpet blew.

O! where was fame
When I came lumbering from the wilderness,
A drunken god, that could not keep the streets?
My tongue was blunter than the Roman mob's.
My thick breast-muscle hungered for hot blows.
My shoulders had the catamountain crouch
That longs to leap among the heads o' the crowd.
I felt the king of beasts; the hurricane
Leaned like a feather on my matted roof;
I took the snarling tiger by the scurf
And left him smiling; my hot bowels laughed,
And my eyes glowed like glass. How tame was man!
I slept in the wet meadows like a horse.
I strolled far mountain tops with less design
Than leads the sea-gone albatros. On crags
That cringe from lightning—black and blasted fronts
That crouch beneath the wind-bleared stars, I flung
My soul wide open to the universe,

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And all night long the clang of her musical gates
Cozened the echoes from Apollo's lyre
And Mars his bloody shield.—Yet all untamed,
Mine evening comes; my snow-white heavens are soiled;
Late-weariness o'ercowls the garrish day;
My gray gull 'gainst the night-fall lifts his wing,
And drinks the damp leagues with his homeless eye.

I read the law thro' the transparent world
That clothes with fibre its vibrating life;
I see it run thro' all things—branched trees
That fork the bird-nests, as the tree-like rivers
That fork the nests of men. But books are dark;
And sterling words are few.

Is this too proud?—
By Heaven, so much of this light vanity
That will not lift a pound of working earth,
Yet crushes hearts in glooms and solitudes
With its unearned success, hath need of it!
I speak the world's best judgment of itself:
We lack the builder's brain, the digger's arm,
We lack the downward compass,—more than all,
We lack the reckless poise, the central fire
Of the born-drunken and the autocrat
That breathe the courage of the world's farewells —
Courage, or arrogance, whate'er it be,
In its revealings homely as God's word,
With purpose truer than God's pardoning throne
To its own justice, that were ill content
To sing a daisy when the world 's afire,
Or lie with silence for the peace of men.

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To face the gap were glorious, tho' to fall.—
Time steals what once I toiled for. They are gone—
The rose-bloom of the cheek, the tireless limbs.
The velvet pouting lips that beauty loved,
The long, mute kisses in the hooded night,
Or in the spungy mead when sodden June
Gushed milk in the rank-sprouting grass, and blood
Hot, fitful, fateful, through the beating heart
And o'er the prickling limbs; yet I'll forget
This brain that labors with its load of blood,
O'erheated, racked, too willing still,—inch deep
I'll paint my wrinkles, young by gaslight yet,
And in the spangles that the galleries love
I'll shoulder yet these five and thirty years,
And like a grinning gladiator bounce
Into the world's arena. Who should know
The laughing athlete had a lonesome eye,
'Till the gray morn was dawning?

So, ye gods—
Are these inevitable thoughts to him
Whom I remember in his pinafore,
With a long alder driving home the cows?—

"Then on!" quoth he: "what tho' to win were nought,
'Twere much to lose. And what the weary world!
Crop out thy plumes, put stars upon thy breast,
For thou mayst wear them ever, if thou wilt.
Gay are the courts of Heaven; and seraphs rich
In beaming youth and beauty shall o'erlid
Their welling eyes, and back their jeweled skirts,
To greet each muscled conqueror of his world."

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II.

Lo! at my navel, with extended touch
That made each fibre of my body squirm,
He found mine end, and yerked a fathom out
Of my coiled flesh—a pinkish silver thread
Whereof like silk cocoons we are enwound,—
A double bowlin tight and a half-hitch
(Which old boat-snubbers say will hold the devil),
Threw o'er an alder slim, and we were off,
The soft night air lapping my mantled limbs.

Slowly at first I felt the cool uncoil,
Like a small blast of wind, weaving about,
Over my shoulders and beneath my arms,
Between my fingers and across my nose.
But soon the wind grew swift: my pulse struck up
In livelier beat, timing the eager sweep
And swift rebalance of the champion oar,
'Till of my line that shone along the flood
At every dip a thousand fathom flew.

On, and still on, past shadowy scenes we fled,
Beneath cavernous heavens that groined us 'round,—
The blood-red lights along the city of Dis,
And his enormous elms, or fancied such
(Which little matters, for these phantoms old

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When we are phantoms shall be granite firm,
Calm, harmless, petrified),—and far aside,
The blue-lit palace house and gardens cold
Of Proserpine the chaste—a wondrous trip;
While, like a weather-cock long winds have worn,
Thinner the garment of my spirit grew.

The Cable-ship, far up along the deep,
Like a slow spider crawling toward the west,
So spun her entrails dark for Heart's Content,
Over our hills and valleys of the sea,
In the low twilight wedding the two worlds.
Ah when, rash pilot, to *thy* heart's content
Wilt thou the land-ho shout? When shall thy bark,
That drags her anchor, feel the whirling flukes
Sink thro' the undertow of life, and hold?

As back I gazed I saw (or did I dream?)
Where my white flesh lay floating on the wave,
Fiends fierce and fell, with teeth like behemoth's,
And shoulders thick and vast—worse featured dogs
Than e'er Hell's sculptors carved her spouts withal
For monsters fished out of a devil's dream,
Seize on my slender coil and drag it down,
With fangs and doubling shoulders try its strength,
And throw their backs across it, but in vain.
And worse than vain: for Charon veered his prow,
And poised his blade beneath my lifted thread,
'Till down its length a subtle molten bolt
Of liquid thunder did explode their jaws
With languid fire that bloodied the dim deep,

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And showed their agony and tumbling flight.—
Not quicker flitting make belated ghosts
That seek the earth's cool shores to bathe in moonlight,
When the cock crows.

Now like an ancient mill,
Her boards and shingles wasting in the wind
'Till moonlight comes clean thro' her, tho' the wheel
Still rumbles on, for still the water flows,
And still it flows when not a fibre stands
Of the old landmark, tho' the heir at law
Still hears the hopper in the land of dreams
And sees the buckets rise, I felt the flesh
Desert my spirit, that still thought and breathed
In freer, finer being; for my wheel
Above the cistern was unbroken yet,
The silver chord not loosed, the buckets swift
Still dashing water o'er the golden bowl.
My arms were folded on my shadow breast
With all their strength, and I was mortal still,
The flowing infinite was far within;
And whilst I listened to that inner life
I heard far cascades fall and fall, and roar.

Now on the tide, the boatman shipped his oar.
There was no sound. The caverns of the earth
Have their mute drip, that saves them from despair;
But this eternity no pendulum beats.
A close suspense, a caught-up, breathless fate,
Whose emptiness, like thought of the unborn,
Forever gapeth like a breathless fish
That seems to choke in its own element,
Silent as summer lightning sucked us on.
Yet my stout heart tugged back to its own world:

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And lo! one star—it doth not move,
In dewy gloom the world above:
Light in the window of my love!
Still wait for me where'er I rove.

Thro' hungry bruit of roaring town,
Thro' nights with folly overflown,
Thro' groups that jest the woman down,
I bear thee in my heart unknown.

O! fiery heart, in mourning furled—
O! weird remorse, thro' madness whirled—
Where are the gods, whose brows are curled,
When one pale face is all the world?

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III.

Far through the gloom, cheering that sombre crypt,
A slant of light celestial struck the wave
As from some wondrous cavern overhead,
And lured us onward.—"Yonder, mortal fair,"
Spake Charon, as the light's first glimmering fringe
Shone through his shadow cowl, yea, his whole stuff—
So thin that moonlight would have quenched him quite
As sunlight drowns the stars—"A breathing place
Of this our sultry realm." Thither we fled.

And there the confines of the night came down
In pillars thick of perdurable stone,
Acres unpregnable, to hitch and hold
The grudging cable of that utmost world
Whose golden lea-wales dash the deepest blue,—
And out beyond them, framed in vistas huge,
Mantled the golden green of the spring air.

My guide was gone. The lights of this fair world
Shivered like thunderbolts his phantom bones,
And left me wondering at the strand alone.

Three regal lillies, standing in the wave,
Bending to its bright glass their tall tiars,
Feeling the boat-swell, rose to see who passed,
And languid drooped,—yet wondering at the sight,
Half raised their dreaming heads, and drooped once more.

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I pressed the grassy and dew-drunken shore
With springtime flushes of hilarious glee.
I knew no fear and had forgotten care.
Spring! how creation freshens at the word!
The frost's crisp teeth in the rough marl ungrasp;
Old rotten planks, thrown on the summer sward,
Squirm at the green-gold sprouts that spire beneath;
Morn takes the maiden blush, tho' winds blow cool
Remembering yet the icebergs, and chill streams
Shiver, so late from winter's manacles.
E'en so the Soul, escaped in her thin shroud,
Thrills the first morning in Elysian dews.

On up the slope, now ankle deep in flowers
Which, caught in harmony of underchimes,
Made the sod sing like effervescing wine,
I like an infant strolled, or man new born,
To whom this life is but a drunken hum
Of half intelligible thoughts and things.

Some gnarled old trees, drunk with the wine of spring,
Their bull-ringed eyes bursting with mounting sap
In dizzy fullness, held their boorish breath
Lest their bark crack, and snap the sylvan charm,
Yet nudged their elbows like old chuckling satyrs
When a fresh bride goes by. I stared them hard,
'Till they behaved themselves: then climbed the bank.

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IV.

If thou wilt credit me, that place I found
Where pivots Nemesis the balance beam,
Hight Purgatorio,—nor damned nor blest,—
The weak uncertainty of poising fate,
Suspense probational, extended grace,
Thro' which all mortals graduate up or down,—
The common porticoes of Hell and Heaven,
Which they that haunt them call THE COLONNADES.

Who shall describe them! sprung from golden haze,
With silver pillars propt, and veiled gold
With berryl blended, or some stuff of dreams
Which who shall measure! shining like the morn
'Mongst trees of morning leaf and sunny fruit,
Tho' locks nor doors were none, wide open all:
The flowers grew wild; the gardens decked themselves;
There was no stir, no work, no careful trade:
No fields were tilled, no laws did touch the will,
Where no necessities gave passion force:
A place of passage that was home to none;
A place of expectation and unrest;
A place of contemplation and resolve;
Silent as Venice and her picture fair
Afloat in the warm sea, when red the sky,
And fanned by great white wings of peaceful Art:

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But far beyond, when seemed it all was seen,
Mountains of pearl and alabaster loomed
In gables, arches, toppling pinnacles,
Bridges of emerald, dull fire, and ice,
With hair-line turrets hardly to be found,
Whence pouring, torrents of mellifluous wind
Fell smooth and downy as a lover's cheek,
With something of the weariness of peace.

How shall I tally their post mortem host,
Or bring it to the fancy of my world?
We have our simple and ingenuous good,
We have our plain incorrigible bad—
Their courses settled, and their ends divined.
But thou hast known the actor, artist, bard,
Philosopher, inventor, mechanician,
The critics and explorers of the soul,
(Say nought of lovers crazed from all true sense,)
Who live their lives still by wide phantasy
Identified and mingled with the rest,—
Filled with all characters, and none their own:
These, by their strong ideals full possest,
Are from themselves thrust out, all virtue lost
Of life straight forward, manly, and serene,—
And here they vibrate, as 'tween earth and air,
'Twixt Hell and Heaven, until of wandering tired,
Tired of self-gaze and borrowed personage,
(Their milky heads grown solid), they revolve
Into some certain orbit of their own.
And some have been here since the Deluge fell,—
Fathers of systems whose hot proselytes

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Shot into Hell swifter than cannon balls,
Who compass yet no judgment for themselves;
While many a sect whose founder is in Hell
Here rides his master's vehicle to Heaven.

Here madmen rove, and sprinkle of all fools
Not saving worth, too simple to be damned.
Children galore, and spirits incomplete,
Too weak for vice or virtue, here educe
Their native bias, where so much of Earth
May find them still as touches them with fate.

Less women here than men; I know not why,
Except our Lord, fairer than sons of men,
Doth draw them 'specially;—a hint the Church
Thro' virgin Mary shifts to man's behoof.

No life had touched his ultimatum here.
The soul lay deep within this spirit flesh
As ever in the carnal, finite still.
Not yet was God in sight, nor Death was dead.
Life's pith and mystery were intact as yet.
The prophets claimed more time, and still foretold.
And 'spite the majesty of Christ himself
(Tho' far translated from this dubious realm)
The point was mooted, was he god or no?
Here love was little, generation none.
No womb conceived, no breast gave milk, yet all
The form and beauty of these organs lived,
E'en like my own dry breast—a sign, no more.
Teeth, but small meat,—these organs too dry up.

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Some work the stomach did, and more the lungs,
Sucking the wild aroma,—but 'tis told
For truth, or poetry, or prophecy,
All organs fade at last; the soul wears through
And but an outline leaves,—which others doubt.

Within the city, past a spacious court
Hard by mine entrance, was a lofty gate,
Whose arch held this inscription overhead:

WHAT'ER HIS HOPE HATH COMPASSED SHALL BE GIVEN
TO HIM ACCEPTING FOR HIS UTMOST HEAVEN.
KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED.

Round about,
Lured by these specious words, a wavering throng
Besieged the gate with smiles of artless joy.
But like the wave that surges 'gainst the rock
The foremost still recoiled upon the rest,
And feared to try the knocker: saddest wight
That ever wept a failing venture, paused,
Nor dared contentment with his own conceit.
I saw none enter; some, that stopped for joy,
Went thoughtful on; some paused, and came again.

Would flesh and blood believe it?—in mid-Hell,
They say, this same alternative appears!

Full of the cheer that mine adventure gave,
Safe in my destiny, nor touched with aught
But joy and mirth by this far-gathered crew,
I strolled among them to their wonderment

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And keen delight, a prodigy indeed!
I felt them touching me with curious hands,
Each pushing other with officious love,—
Lest I be crowded crowding close themselves,
As when a colloquy of maids unused
Do pass the baby 'round. From these I learned
My visit opportune; this very day
(For so 'twas set at stated intervals)
Two champions met in controversy stern,
From either world beyond (and one no less
Than the fair bride of Lucifer himself),
To proselyte these hosts for Heaven and Hell.

Ne'er had I heard as yet Hell's charms enlarged
By runner in the credit of that house,
Much less ta'en sample of the devil's mate,
And begged they might have audience sans delay;
But some hours yet were waiting,—best improved
Using the city's freedom. Whereupon
With kindly guidance I at once set forth.

(Methinks Apollo is no dainty god;
To every quarter glance his arrows keen,—
Nor less the hunter tho' with bow unbent
He switched a thistle with the dangling string.
All is not poetry: not all that's writ
Would stock a folio of contenting verse.
Since angels have their whims, the brightest bards
Their sun-spots, and all tribes their difference,
(E'en Death will grin, with no flesh on his bones),
There may be nonsense on the steps of Heaven.

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Where'er we differ, take me but in jest.
I hold to little but I scouted once;
And we say some things for acquaintance' sake.
Where reason halts let instinct stand divine,—
Tho' some sly critics hold them both for one,
And say one soul looks thro' all living things,
Or tree, or shell, or bird, or beast, or man,
With sight according with the organs given.
But soul is not the gods; the gods deny it.
The truth is nature, seen from every point.
Doubt not the madman's whim, nor mine deny;
There's something in it—and in everything.
So God be with you all!)

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V.

In castles old—
In modern palaces as well, the halls
Of entrance are with trophies decked: the horns
Of stags outheld by dogs forgotten long,
Pictures, and cabinets of treasured waifs
Of days by-vanished, or more modern scraps
Of art and science, kept for memory.—
Here in a wilderness of glimmering naves,
Where pillared Silence stoops from arches vast
To feed on murmur of discursive groups
That show like summer bees upon the floors,
Stands the museum of the by-gone world,
Wherein the greatest and the smallest born
Of mortal creatures, whether land or sea,
Each in his element, their species prove.

Here monsters of all consciousness e'er known,
From men that deemed them gods, to fiends perverse
Whose study sought how bad the bad could be;
Giants that knew no sympathy with man,
Crazed with the magnitude of their conceits;
Pigmies and dwarfs by fate's apprentices,
Rude caveats filed before the patent man;
Abortions, double-heads and Sodomites,
Half man, half beast, that throng old sculptors' dreams;

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Models suggestive and empirical
Of working globes in many methods built
To cure the wabbling journals of our Earth;
Diversions, pictures, statues, what beside,
To make the head ache?—and all these in charge
Of one I name not: call him the Last Man,
For all his comfort was that homely saw,
"The tail goes with the hide." A queer one he,
Caught in that paradise of Upsal's seer
Where none that enters sees another's back,—
Or haply sprung from Luna, courtly wench,
Who will not turn her hind side to the world,
But backs out bowing, like a maid of honor.
Seemly there was no back-part to his head,
And all his thought went forward; his wide breast
Forgot all fitness to his childish legs,
And his vast forehead and wide-rolling eyes
Confounded nature with the squeamish chaps
His chin had swallowed up.—"Out, afterbirth!
Out, remnant!" one cried, passing,—but at hand
Æsop, that prince of fablers took it up,
(Himself a fellow of the cactus breed)
And read the scoffer such a homily
Of law, variety, and recompense,
As, to my sense, justice herself out-did,
Making the crooked straight, and the straight crooked.
Enough, the cutter did not come again.

Ye sons of genius, scorn not that your tribe,
Born upright, but to strange inventions given
'Gainst truth's simplicity, should harbor here;

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For thro' these halls, gardens, and thoughtful groves,
Believe it ye or not, more genius walked
Than Earth's twin continents united boast:
Substratal hearts who underlie all times,
The world's first princes, on whose tawny arms
Barbaric gold still glimmers, on whose feet
The royal sandal smells of Lebanon yet.

Solomon here, with Hiram of old Tyre,
Hath set his temple up. Semiramis
And those collosal heads and lions winged
Of Belus' temple and his wondrous tomb,
Are undivided still. That gaudy prince
Of Indian Elephantis, on whose breast
Sun, moon, and stars, and birds and animals,
And trees and rivers set Creation forth,
Here hath not changed his coat. Of Egypt's sons
Were least of any. Grew her solemn art
Necessitous from the weak stomached land
That would not hold her dead in sepulture,—
And for that Theban—he whose name alone
Of Gypsey sculptors have the books preserved,
Memnon, I looked in vain. But little missed:
For those light-hearted and ingenious Greeks
So thronged these porticoes that, by their talk,
Stone-cutting was the business of the world.

Here strolled that Daedalus whose chisel first
Showed nature's nakedness,—with Malas bright
Who first in marble wrought; nor far from these
Callirhoe who first of humankind

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By lamplight caught her lover on the wall
With gritty charcoal, founding a new art.
Him too I saw who reared the Parthenon,
The wide-eyed Phidias, on his brow the scowl
Wherewith Jove censured the invidious Greeks
Who made him exile for his haughty stride.
Near him Praxiteles, all grace and love,
As t'other was all majesty and strength.
Nor be forgot that Chares, mad as March
For help to lift his statue to the sun;
Nor he,—But wherefore shall I name them o'er—
Acquaintance claimed at modesty's expense?
A thousand thousand sons of every art,
And daughters too full many, what tho' less,—
Bards, artists, dreamers, sages, orators,
Whoever had a bubble in his head,—
Not from fair Greece alone, nor yet from Rome
The patron and the plunderer of Greece,
But many a wight well stared in later times,
(Even to him whose soul the sunlight struck
Among the chips of Copenhagen dock),
Builders, empirics, from that Archimede
Who thought to lift the world, to that French fool
Who kicked the world from under him, Mongolfier,—
Fools and philosophers at hob and nob,
And first and second childhood hand in hand.

Thou had'st not thought now to have Plato here!
(Yet died he with his head upon a jest),
Nor gay Aspasia? nor that brilliant crew:
Zeno, Protagoras, wise Pericles,

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With Anaxagoras, and him no less
Whom Grecian girls did follow with their eyes,
Bright Alcibiades,—and stranger still,
Calm Socrates, who at Aspasia's feet
(What wonder if Xantippe was a shrew?)
Did own that Cupid was the god of Jove,—
Which Jove himself, so many times transformed
In that god's urgent service, did attest?—
Yet Plautus, Terrence, Aristophanes,
With old Scarron, that laughed Death in the face,
Ye could not reckon any where but here.

How vast is heaven—and what should Plato here?
What myriad legions of the dead whose names
Are space in history, happy and redeemed,
Sprinkle the thousand empires of the blest,—
Whose thoughts are turned to sight, whose toils are o'er,
In courts of beauty and beneficence
Whereat the pink of life's perfections prank!
Then what holds Plato here?—Hast thou not seen
The gaudy coteries of this present world,
By various lights engilt, by curious arts
Befeathered, nurtured, carried and amused?
Yet where were they who made these what they were?
Where were the sons of genius whom the kings
Had decked with medals for their cunning works?
Down in the work-shops, or in dock-yards strolling,
Or in dank basements where in engines black
The sighing giant shoulders the grim shaft
And shoves the world along. So greatness here
Affects the toils whereby his crown was earned.

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So Newton, Herschel, and Copernicus,
And Galileo, who had martyr been
But his shrewd genius was not martyr stuff,
More rapt by fancy than by good or ill,
Gaud not their brows with paradisean plumes.

Speak for these last I will not; but for him,
"Plato divine," who praised the naked dance
For virtue's growth and proper modesty's,
(Wherefor Eusebius hath him smartly lashed),
I must determine him well posted here.

And it fell out—most fortunate I was,
This point was mooted where we passed along
By an Egyptian youth, while opposite
Praxiteles, with Plato at his back,
Defended his nude statutes in these words:

"Pure art is nature's mirror. In the fields
No beauty presses to be viewed; no filth
Flies to the back-ground, but stands fearless still.
What tho' 'twere fit to read her book alone?—
Books speak but to the soul. The student rapt
Would have his book as private as his love.
So watch my statues, and forget the world."

Then spake the Egyptian, with some haughtiness:
"Sink'st thou to nature, who art nature's judge?
Sink'st art to life, wrought by the spirit of life?
Give science base detail. Art beats herself
When vulgarizing instinct's private marks
And second thought's reserves. What savage yet

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Wore human nature naked without shame?—
To mighty circumstance and tragic fate
Something may be forgiven,—not unto her
Whose wanton paps project the impudence
Of lust and idle days. There is a realm
Where waste libidinous fancies find their due:
Incest and sodomy claim kindred there
With genius reveling in unhallowed dreams.—
Forgive this difference; in my motherland
The dead stood 'mong the living, and the forms
Which genius chiseled had the modesty
Of the dead's reverence. Never arm was raised,
Nor legs were sundered, in Egyptian stone;
Close draped were all, severe and mystical,
Solemn and stern as life and death at once."

The brow of Plato at this homely thrust
Grew thick; his hand put back the sculptor's arm
Who was at point of utterance, and thus he:

"Back to thy childhood pure, thou race mistaught,
And blush thy coming naked in the world!
Stay not, like Socrates to hide thy face,—
Or that which Pallas did, pull down the hood
When Jove consulted her of Mercury's love.
Tully himself from that Timaeus shrank,
And could not understand;—and these perchance
May own a purity they cannot see,
Save thro' the hint which genius gives in stone.
Howe'er my words err, yet my life was honest,
(As Ovid saith); say with Catullus more:
Mortal I am, for humane actions fit.

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"I am the byword of immortal love.
I could have hugged a demon, yea, and blest him,
E'en for his human shape. Men smiled at me;
My face was a thanksgiving in the street;
I was medicinal; there was life in me;
My coming reeked of it. Pale dying girls,
Burnt out with civilization, would have leapt,
But custom let them, to my longing arms,
And nestled in my neck, and bade me save them.
I should have been a fountain in the courts,
Where they that languished could have washed and healed;
Or on some low, lone sanctuary couch
With velvets drapen twenty cubits high,
Approached thro' groves and vistas of rose lights,
They should have come to me and clasped my breast—
The fallen, the world-outcast, the broken hearted,
And learned that love is life. Out in the fields
I saw the sick lift up the mouldering stones,
And breathe for nature's balm in the fresh ground,
Prone to their mother-dust:—from my strong arms,
O fading ones, as from a smoking mold
I had recast ye; ye believe in God,
(I might have told them), so believe in me.

"This love is nature's medicine. The man
Is healer of the woman, she of him.
Yet O vain hypocrites, is this the woman—
This monstrous form, all naked to the waist,
And all below scaled over and submerged?—

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"O breath hot vapored from the bath of blood,
Fond reeking from the mysteries of life,—
O fair, enchanting swell, like the heaped wheat
Set round with lillies of the king of Israel—
Smooth as the feathered body of a bird,—
O close and polished limbs whose pillars guard
The deep and perilous basin of the race—
The dark charged chamber whence the vital spark
Sends genius mounting o'er the startled world,—
The silent, yearning womb, that breaks the heart,—
Here shall I lay mine ear, O heaving form,
And hear the secret that upheaved the world,
And spoke the tragic thunders of the past?
These cannot tell it. Beauty it was not,
But that which beauty indicates within,
And lives upon. Or this, or woman's soul
Set in flesh masculine had been but man.
We differ to the centre, as the three,
Creator, Lover, and Inspirer run
Convergent blending, not in meeting lost;—
And when these centres wed, all outward spots
Grow fair as fashions—every blemish sacred
Thro' love's defence. A thousand bandaged eyes
See beauty where no beauty was before,
Nor is to others yet—lit thro' with love.

"Strip off yon fig leaf! 'tis the devil's shield.
He makes all sex a toy. Who truly loves
Hath found his match, his mistress, and his foil;
He shall look up to her, as she to him;
She hath a fortitude outlasting his—
A faith inspired his efforts to outhope,

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That soaks like oil around his creaking brain,
And lubricates her cells.—Alas, too many
Whose love washed clear in tears, yet like twin flowers
Rain-drenched and beaten to the gritty grass,
Had nought but passion to their recompense!
But royal lovers, like the lilly bells,
Upright and rooted with elastic stems,
Wave in the breeze together and recoil
With beauty ever wooing, ever won."—

The hilt hereof I did not apprehend
To satisfaction—which confirmed me more
That this was truly Plato I had heard.—

Then spoke an old, old wight, with the scared smile
That doubts its welcome: "When the Flood was falling,
We pushed the women up the mountain tops,
And some were naked; but no creature laughed:
All sex had perished in humanity."

Now who of men that woman ever bore
To such discussion were amenable,
If not Marc. Antony? (and thro' these walks
More lovers congregate than all besides.)
He smiled on Plato, and his words were these:
"Yon speaks as love were but a water-drop
In man's deep current—not that fountain head
Whence all the streams of genius overboil."

"And what is genius, friend?" the Egyptian asked;
And Marcus answered, categorical:
"We speak of genius as intenser light,
That shows intrinsic values in the world."—

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"Bright in Marc. Antony," the Egyptian smiled,
"Was this—who fled o'er Actium's laughing waves
To catch the jesses of our royal trull!
Fame's sound was more to him than Earth's whole stuff,
And Egypt's tawny nipples more than both:
These were true values?"—
"Aye! an hour of love
Outweighs an age of glory. Lords of men
Whose eyes outringed the circles of the earth
Beyond all others—who best knew to judge,
From loftiest eminence, have turned their backs
On solid worlds, to soothe their blooded brows
'Tween the soft hemispheres of woman's breast.
The sorriest maid hath wealth to beggar princes;
And that first down upon her virgin lip,
The heaven of music in her swaying limbs,
The king shall rate above the bloodiest brave
Whose head was knocked out of his sweaty helm.
Love is the whole world's lustre; but for him,
The moon were pewter, and the trees and flowers
Were daubed with daylight like a player's face.
How poor, how impotent all after hopes
To him whose arms enclip this perfect form!"

So spake the Roman; and the Egyptian quick:
"Ah! Cleopatra was a dainty youth—
Thou must have heard it from her Cesar's lips."

"Thou mud of Nile!" the choleric fighter cried,
(For Cleopatra, so the story goes,
Stormed through these whiffling legions straight to hell,

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Nor waited for a schedule of the place—
Which many a smiling hearer had in mind)—
" Son of a land that 'neath the tropic shakes
With the grave's chilliness—a bloodless land,
With corpses grinning from all cupboards 'round,—
Whose children are born old, and all whose wit
Served never yet to 'indite a madrigal,—
Thou may'st build theories on thy gloomy tribe;
But never shake thy treatise o'er a world
Where love besides was master. Better thou
Confessed with Tully, he was born a fool
Who will not greet love for a mighty god.
Apollo cureth every wound but his.
He made Jove satyr, bull, and swan, and shower;
Tyrant of Socrates, Maximus' bloodhound,
Whole cities hath he eaten at a meal;
Witness Persepolis, and Troy likewise,—
And nature's dearest blood hath he let out,
As when hard Cataline his only son
Slew for an hour's content. Can stuff like this
Be thrown as filth into the nearest ditch,
Unreckoned with the great things of the world,
And lineal subjects of all-serious Art?"

Plato stood patient waiting, with reproof
Of misconception by the last; but now
A wight came by, a wanderer for love,
Brain-cracked on earth, who thus outcrew them all:
" Avaunt ye wantons and exceptionals—
Ye fools and mad, whose fate the Book tells not!
Ye each are stricken with a single shaft,

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But Love hath poured his quiver in my heart.
Admiring far, and loving coming near,
Nearer, all passion-burnt, and nearer still,
Fruition-maddened with the knowledge deep
Of secrets better kept,—the eagle gnaws,
We sink, we die, we rise, we grow again,
While over all, unheeded, undesired,
Coils slow the love that kills and never dies,
Yet is the same old Love from first to last."

Then said the sculptor, "Thou hast had thy dreams!"—
And the mad answered: "Dreams! hot dreams, as burned
"The mad sleeps snatched by young Praxiteles,
When, with his crisp curls in the marble chips
'Neath Venus' half-cut bust, a moment's space
He saw her white limbs swim the haggled block
Whence ne'er a hand could fish them but his own,
Then vanished to the gods."—Wildly he sang:

"O! why am I not as other men,
That thy breath should make me fire?
I burn up the tale of the human heart
In the flames of fierce desire.
My deep and hot-prest kisses
Scarce graze thy flesh so fine;
I would eat thy lips like rose-leaves,
I would feel thy blood in mine.

"O! that we were drowned, love,
Down in the solid main,
In our ears the crazy stound, love,
Nor seen of man again,

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Where the fury of mortal passion
Should 'scape God's angry laws,
And our sodden arms should fold us round
Like wet sea monsters' paws.

"There's a love the brute will fight for,
There's a love by which man dies;
But more than these united
Was hot in our copper skies.
My blood poured liquid lightning,
Like lava rose thine own,
And we met, as two balls of thunder
Had struck in the burning zone:
Far o'er the blasted landscape
Rent creeds and shrines lay shattered,
And down the shades of hopeless days
Our love's first heaven was scattered."

E'en thus these phantoms lingered with the world
Which they no more should see,—their impetus
Part in themselves, not wholly passion-free,
And part conjecture of the world to come,
And resolution of life's doubtful laws.
Here earth, hell, heaven, alike are off the track,
But earth, their mother, was remembered best.

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VI.

Think not the Past, that cost almighty care,
Hath left her story to thy thin records,
Or pinched in cipher 'tween the grunting rocks:
Soft eyes of spirits, with esthetic glow,
Gaze thro' the pictures of the Father-house—
Wainscotted windows looking out of life,
Across her vast and splendid passages.

Pictures were here outreaching man's conceit:
Things raw and nebulous, e'er baby Time
New swaddled, mewled, and marked the misty shore
With that first wabbling circle which is yet
The cipher of all being—long e'er Sol
With dangling halters brushed the Elysian dews,
Hunting the coursers of his new-gilt car,
Back in the unimagined past, e'er heat
Had struck the occult genitals of Death,
Or space conception of these wonders brewed.
Lo! glooms tremendous, hints of sombre fire,
Convulsions tumbling in primordial horror
E'er Nature's pulse had started in her veins,
Arches of ages keyed by fate alone
Thro' night and chaos to the vortex fierce,
Whence ever outward with a singing sound
Red smoking life doth pour, and from the midst
Quick stars snap forth, brand-new, at scarlet heat,
And cool to silver in the distant blue.

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Then come the clear, clean heavens, white fields of stars
Whose diagrams the lost astrologer
Is missing still,—with all the afterclaps
Of wit and morals: the old angel wars,
Where spears and gonfalons and baldricks glow
In feuds whose tales in heavenly heraldry
Emboss the shields of lineal angels yet.

Then softer passages: when woman stript
Her starlight bosom to the gods, or sons
Of gods, while sighs but she could hear, and kisses
From lips invisible, and embraces warm
Of forms too soft e'en starlight to reflect,
Bore her to earth half yielding, half afraid,
Out of her human lover's jealous arms,
E'er he could say "where wilt? what dost thou see?"

Adam and Eve here, in their naked youth,
(From Milton's sombre pencil born too old),
In the red, prickling springtime of the blood
Told the coy tale of reft virginity
In bashful tears that sprinkle strange sixteen,
Soothed in the shadow of her torrent hair.

Here too the Fall: not fall'n, disconsolate,
Nor guilty skulking, flushed and pouting Eve
Sidled a harlot glance at questioning Heaven,
Self-justified; and the dismantled man
Stalked contumacious, charging all on her.

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Three visions from the glory of our Lord
Here vanquished all beside:—Upon the left,
Soft moonlight floats the palaces of Rome,
Save where a tier of dull and smoky lamps
Invest the circus with a tawny ring.
Blood-red the arena shows, where the red fighters
Late snatched the rampant lions in the beard,
Now both with hooks from foul spoliarium dragged
Like filth, while hastily the trampled sands
Are raked and freshened for the morrow's show.
The far-off woods are shuddering grim and chill,
Where thro' dead boughs the splintered moonbeams fall
On hamadryads bearing the dead Pan
In quaint procession, while yet further east
Some blear-eyed sages of Chaldea stare
At a new planet in the heavens,—and lo!
From off the wrinkled shoulder of the Bull
The jewel of the Pleiades is gone.

The centre-piece—no artist could have done 't—
Black storm, and lightning, with a crowd of men
That pushed the women back—a priestly crew
Upgazing fiercely, on a mountain's brow,
To the white sufferer hoisted by his hands,
Where the raw spikes bloodied each stretching wrist,
While his lost countenance, and lifted eyes
Whose tears fell slowly to the broken heart,
Bleated above their heads to heavens forlorn
The "Lama sabacthani?"—

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On the right,
Soft moonlight floats the palaces of Rome,
But the red ring has faded. Far aloft,
What wonder flutters the descending gods
Who come to sniff the human sacrifice
That erst these altars knew?—Victorious Cross!
It marks the world: no shaft and architrave,
No joice and plate in all the moonlight streets,
No street itself encrossed by moonlight aisles,
No branching tree of shadowy Academe,
But now seems cruciform, for love's revenge,
Unto their banished eyes.
Nor lacked the tale
Of Christ's lost sepulchre embellishment
With cross and crescent, what time Lion-Heart
Struck for Jerusalem, in those brave days
When knight could ride a horse and strike as well,—
With Godfrey, Saladin, and thousands more.—

Look where the Pilgrims land! The faithless waves
All loose and heartless splash repulsive ice,
And the gray sky crowds close the dreary woods.
It palls mine eyes: not so these glowing braves'
Whose stern breath tags their beards with icicles;
Their souls wide open welcome the hard scene
Flush in their element, and whilst they quell
Their difficulties, never wish them less.—
And in the winter fierce whose blackened water,
Thrown in the air, comes down congealed and clashing,—
When out the crisp, cold night squeaks like a vice,
And makes the house-boy breathe his aching hands

7

Lo! the red lights.
And horses numberless! The world is won.
The world is Cali: Hephäestion he is dead,
And stars grow thoughtful o'er the revelry
Of Alexander, drunk in Babylon.

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As huh! he cries, and throws down the green wood
That splits like stone,—and the good man comes home
Stamping the snow off, short and dry as cotton,—
When bare bows plaintive croak, tho' crusted stacks
Show hopeful store, and Patience sighs, "please God
With Prudence we shall bring the winter thro',"
These plethoric hearts felt stuffed, dyspeptical
With too much of prosperity and peace,
And longed to break new ground.
A miracle
I oft have seen: Far in the tangled woods,
Beside an ice-clad lake the pioneer
Warms his bare hands, slapping his shirted shoulders,
Then on his axe beneath the windy trees
He faces to the wilderness, and smiles.

"Oh for an hour in my own grassy world,
With orange clouds low bagging in the west,
Heavy with damp and perfume,—loaded wains
With creaky reaches staggering slowly home
Thro' lanes and gates time hallowed,—poplars tall,
High quivering white above the cock and vane,
From undergrowth that sings with summer bees!"

A wish, no more, and straight our course was changed.
No more came scenes historic—patent stuff
That books are full of, but the visions dear
That feed our reveries of early days.
Still as life's story grows the canvas waits
To catch the question of the passing hour—
A mighty record, like the Book of Life,
Wherein truth lingers for peculiar eyes,
And like a portrait stares at one and all.

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Here golden lies the moss on cottage eaves
That look to the blue mountains from the vale
With elms of solitude, where I was born—
The broad grouped elms, whose pictures dusk are shown
Down in the sunset's gold-vermilion lakes.—

Here the wind roughens, and the scene is changed;
The ancient Willow, witch among the trees,
Sways o'er the mirror with her head sidelong,
And combs her gray thin tresses toward the brook.

The summer hills! a glowing afternoon
Of blistering, breathless calm; the branching trees
Stand moveless as the bald and flickering crags.
Listen!—wide silence, so intense the spell,
Sings like a fairy cascade, or the scheme
Of tenor locust to the droning bass
Of humble-bee a mile off down a dream.
Yon beetle's polished, woody wings do snap
Like clattering chips that from the turner fly.
O frenzy life! yon dainty darting span
Of fluctuant butterflies could mount the heavens,
And carry all my care. An eagle keen,
Bent o'er yon crag in penciled solitude,
Looks down the visionary gorge unmoved.

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Do not the long-wed particles of earth
Assume the sense of beauty in her forms,
As bolts laid northward catch the electric flow?—
How many pets hath time personified!

Yon low long Mountains, past the simmering deep,
Recline like giants in huge dreaming ease.
No cloud-curls blear their bald, bonvivial brows;
Their feet outstretched are laving in the main;
Vines fill their laps, and groves perch on their knees:
These are the gods of peace. Far back appear
The snow-white tent-tops of the gods of war.
One volcan council-tent grimes, in the midst,
With slow faint smoke the heavens—a grumbling camp!

Thou, Ocean, hast thy mistress, and she comes
Quickening thy pulse—the wind, the gentle Gale.
I heard her plaining of a shameless Gorge
That hugged and kissed her 'neath his savage beard,
When go she would to start a lagging sail.
Sooth! how she strove, and tore his tangled hair;
Clouds hurried 'round, frowning in wrath and tears,
Till Lightning saw; he, leaping from his lair,
With one stroke split the varlet's head, and freed
Her to thy bosom, sobbing and o'erdone,
Then gaily laughed and shook his gallant plume
Above the hills, while thou, with wrath afoam,
And many a back-look threatening, bore her off.

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I saw mine Earth far off—I heard her song.
She hath no toil—no cares of mortal man;
She takes all day to turn, and suns herself
In green immortal leisure. Beautiful Earth!
So green, with her white poles, and golden zone:
Yet old, ye rocks and mountains—racked and old,
Hinting bygone magnificence,—the Moon
A spotted heirloom old of battered silver
That Darkness buckles on his starry helm,
And veils from the bright Sun. Are the gods weary
Of governing the world? The world is weary,
And cons the uniformity of life,
Whose music is the murmur of decay—
The song of Ruin. Weary of their load
The temple pillars have lain down; the owl
Hoots at the Pilgrim from his ruined shrine,
Blear in the desert like a shattered skull,
And mocks his twilight stories of the soul.
Ships moulder on the deep, their spars drop off,
And spiked planks let go the rotted dock,
And backward dropping, slap the startled flood.
All things grow weary of the pendulum swing;
They lay them down in silence, muffling close
Under the drooping boughs whence none hath spoken,—
And feathery faint Time's dreaming river flows
Soft by the cypress shore—the woods of old repose.

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VII.

Here were all whims that mortals ever caught
By monomaniacs held and cherished still.
One from the chords of a strange instrument
Did music prove a science absolute
And mathematical; all tribes, he said,
Were one in harmony and breadth of note,
With passions told by tones identical.
All thought, he taught me, was material force
Born of cohabitation of the soul
The male, and spirit female,—more to match:
(Of this same madness was our Shakspeare touched:)
And so he found one soul in all that live.

Brother to this, or brewed of the same batch,
Lit thro' a brain-crack, was a Bactrian sage,
Professor of the language of the gods—
That voice of nature which in Shinar's plain
Was last confounded,—tho' himself in doubt
Of that whole reading, setting forth, he said,
In allegory men's attempt at this
(By him encompassed) universal tongue.
Of all the madmen that e'er mumbled yet
If this were not the maddest, let him pass.
It was a simple tongue, he said. The gods

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Were of few words; as few were nature's laws;
And those inventions out of virtue's beat
That do men good and double-charge them for it,—
All words that grow from violated law,
Wherewith man covers and defends himself,
The gods knew not,—and therefore many prayers
No audience find. A monstrous book he had,
Which through the letters of all nations traced
That fragment of the original whose life
Cropped out in snatches of strange songs, by-words,
And names that parcels seemed of things themselves.
Poets alone, he said, this language guess;
And with a knowing leer and sidelong nudge
He gave me precepts for my wallowing age
Which, "could I catch her by the dexter lug,
Should make her shift her belly in the mire,
That some of her nine farrow should let go."

The Swedish seer had sure encountered this,—
For saith he not, those angels loving most
Breathe full on the O sound and the broad A?
(Which mean, this doctored me, adoring joy,)
While angels keen, of piercing intellect,
Intense, deep-seeing, use the sound of E.
D was for density, for moisture S,
T, H and F, for all ethereal things;
G was for grit, for chill and polish L,
And R made rough, and all voluptuous P;
U was the humorous lubber of the book,
A jovial savage of all heaven cast out,
Whereby no Dutchman hath admittance yet.

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But should I linger for such wights as this
My tale were ill accomplished. Alchemists,
Hunters for life's Elixir, circle-squarers,
Abounded here. Motion perpetual—
The scoff of fools who laugh the planets down,
Had students numberless. One dreary wight
Had built a solid ring about the earth
Nine fathom clear of surface—waiting now
To lose our globe's rotation, and revolve
From east to west, that he might cog thereto:
Saturnian wheelwrights used no other force!

Astrologers—no man could tell their tale,
For surely fate shall be the question here—
Wandered about, each chin upon his breast,
(For these look downward when they read the stars),
With signs and wonders on their gabardines.
'Twas their best argument, they all were old;
And to our banter light one calmly said:
"Jeer not, beloved son, the belting stream
Which bind Orion and the Pleiades
With their sweet influence. Sure thine earthly nerves
Confessed the east wind and the fulling moon,—
Your bards, and fighters, and philosophers
Have favorite months of birth,—nor can it be
The babe whose first impressive weeks are aired
In vernal skies, should catch the poet gloom
Of infants housing from November's wind;—
Yet moons how many could lift Jupiter,
Or Uranus tilt from his dreaming round?
Their far strength measures this bold satellite

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As some dead poet's doth a demagogue
Perched on the tide-wave of democracy.
Thy days are written in the elements.
The art of numbers tells all prophecy,
And only science reads the book of fate."

Our banterer begged a chapter,—but the sage
Had made his conge with his nose in air.

Priests there were here, not many,—popes, a brace;
I name them not, for they were earnest spirits,
Nor long were here, nor longer like to stay—
For priests find hell or heaven the shortest way.
What most these grieved was lack of ordnance due—
Machinery for devotion: crosses, beads,
Wax, latin—holy haberdasherie,—
None such at hand. I heard a prelate sigh:

"O holy wilderness, whose foliate glooms
And solid trunks, so many centuries old,
Clip strength and safty 'round world-flying saints,
And sweet and balmy days, (ah, not for me)—
O holy Church, that through a thousand years
Of mist and dark, with tall masts dipt in light,
Sailed slowly down bearing the ark of God,—
What was the life and glory of the world,
Its wit, romance, its arsenals and arms,
But thee and thine? Thy handsome prelates smiled
Like gods o'er the dark crowd. Tho' rapine's hand
Made life a terror, death a welcome rest,
Bravo and brigand knelt in the highway
For the priest's blessing, and gave up the gold

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Ta'en from milord,—while books, that keep the past,
Sweetened the mellow hours in cloisters dim,
And inspirations from the lineal Head
Composed the conscience of the friars in peace
And gave them sweet sad mastery of life."—
Again he sighed, clasping his hands behind,
And wandered on with looks downcast and sad.

Thou wouldst not wonder, amid scenes like these
To find the bard, "more fat than bard beseems,"
Who sung the house of wizzard Indolence:
And here he twirled that wondrous crystal 'round,
Mirror of Vanity, and on his own
And others' follies all his humor poured.
"Ah! would," quoth I, "my world were less of bulk—
A one-mile globe, that man might walk about,
And take the measure of with certainty;—
He would not dig so deep, and his first thought
Would touch the climax of his jumping off."
The glass showed such a one, a model world
With scarce five hundred people. "Lo!" quoth he,
"There are not bigger fools in Jupiter."

He seemed content; and many pleasant things
I heard from him, who after joined our stroll,—
And who like him to point all beauties out?
But here we differed, for he soon was off
The fair surroundings of his world to show—
Its walks and ways; I was for inside work,
And moved him (surely 'twas across the grain)
To give me glimpse of divers of the bards,—
And this, in some reluctance, he essayed.

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VIII.

A window, vaster than the scenic arch
Of hugest theatre, before us showed
A world within a world, new heavens, new earth,—
For whose behoof, or to what purpose turned,
Shall haply better show at last than now;
Their best explaining were a mystery still.
But by some strange magnetic drawing down
Of sympathy, or love appreciative,
The sprites ye long for here alight like birds,
Or grow to vision from the air itself.

'Twere a strange question, whom I longed for most!—
He came upon me like the morning light
That drowns all question. Back in my lone soul
I sought some echo of this lonely man
Whom my rash thought had summoned. 'Round my heavens
His creatures rose: one quarter filled Macbeth,
The Tempest opposite filled half my sky,
Lear rose between, and Andronicus' woes,
Marcius, and Cymbeline, and Cesar,—yet
I could not speak—all these must I take down;—
Hamlet, and Romeo, and the Moor—again
My heavens were full, again I wiped them off,
And in a flash passed York and Lancaster,
And all the rose-clad wars, while following swift

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High o'er my head a hundred pranking shapes,
Blooded with lightning, laughed, and shrieked, and sighed.
Is this a god (I thought), invisible
Save part and passage-wise, in these wild works
Submerged, impersonal, heartless, and unknown?—
All styles decay, and from their mouldering forms
Fresh genius flowers, and foliage springs anew—
For genius is the flower of its own age;
But thou eternal hast not style at all:
Who mimics thee must build him other worlds.

"Mirror of men (I cried) whose changing glass
Could show us all men's features but thine own,
Yet cared to leave us nought—for thy round plays,
Like ostrich eggs left orphaned in the sand,
Flew up and plumed the desert of the world
A wild self-nurtured brood,—O, unit lone,
Heading the long-ranked ciphers of the bards
Giving significance, the giant Past
Stands upright in thy lofty caverned head
And twirls his club, nor strikes the seamy dome.
Across that ample casement whence thine eye
Fired celebration o'er the steepled world,
Each sounding charge vaulting the continents
To plump into the deep, no frown e'er lowered.
O sweet, unsullied soul, be thou struck out
Christ saves a weary world!
"Now, Master, come!
Think how the hungry throng would gorge thy words!
Say but a sentence, that their longing hearts
May know thou'rt living still,—nay, only one,

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Tho' quaint and picking as a snuff-dry knight
Prim on a joint-stool with his dagger's point
Spearing a flaw in some escutcheon book,—
Or crazy gentle as a mountain sprig
Whose one slim root sucks at a fissured rock,—
Or brute and shaggy as a churl morose
Fell braining house-dog with an andiron,—
Or strong and splendid as the clashing scales
And the harsh motions of rough-jointed war;
For thou art master of the art of arts:
Or is it art, or sight, or accident—
This bloom of thought that will in dungeons root,
Or flourish in the air and drift world wide,
Or like the estridge, suck its life from iron,
Or some chameleon, fatten on the wind?"—

Still was he dumb; but a light sonneteer
(For many bards beyond now seemed to stand)
Made answer for him: "Louder—he is deaf!"—
"And well he might be, to the noise of sonnets
Of fourteen lines the batch," I made reply.

"O bard, creator—lo! I kiss the dust:
Thou art the master builder: yet is 't good
Thy self-forgetfulness should scorn our pride?
Hast thou no creed, no spite, no policy,
To hinge thee to thy race, and flatter us
With some weak hope of heaven, or fear of hell?
Or must we say, thou greatest soul of Earth,
Thy greatness was but her's? no word of thine
Echoes in halls immortal—is it so?
And doth Earth's fitness reckon every chance?"

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As if another Macedonian forced
The faltering oracle, the master smiled,—
Kissed with dramatic wave his jeweled hand
That showed the player still, and in a trice
His gorgeous kirtle, sailing down the air,
O'erthrew me with its weight. With manful strife
My staggering legs did thrust my visage thro'
(So some smart general stumbles o'er his sword)
When lo! the train, for all my stretch and strut,
Dragged backward hopeless fathoms in the dust.
"Alack," quoth I, "there needs thy buskin yet,
Whose mounting heel might bid the mantle swing."

Now nothing doubt, the bard had barefoot gone,
But one spake up, (methinks his voice it was
Who first proposed the blotter for his lines),
"The toe would serve his elevation best,
And all such vain aspirants'." E'er my wrath
Could mind the brick-layer of his gritty line,
A rush of wings and sound of trumpet blast
Bereft me gaping, while far off and dim
A form, that might be Fame, with angry hands
Locked fast the mantle 'round the master's neck,
And the fair phantoms melted in mid-heaven.—

With bonnet cocked, and tartan to the breeze
From his wide shoulder with a cantie fling,
The Heart of Scotland strode into the air.
"Ho, Rab! (I cried), thou's nicked the deil as yet,
For a' your jobbin—Gie's the tither stave!"

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As when the red coals glow 'tween smouldering brands
The dark orbs glittered 'neath his swarthy brows
That rose and hovered like an eagle's wings;
An iron smile—a sigh—and something thus:—

"Ye roose me high, guid friend! Alas,
Time's sands hae canted monie a glass
Sin' I yon crankous Musie lass
Hae spiert o' sang:
My Pegasus syne gaed to grass—
God knows how lang!

"But just ae thing ye mauna doubt:
What tho' nae brunstane-brewin rout
May swirl thae rantin chiels about
Wi' leisters dire,
There's waur to tak their temper out—
Leeze me on fire!

"Wee Sandy Pope, for makin face,
Perked on a stool in spitefu' case,
Maun croon the power o' sauvin grace
Frae Davy's Psalms,—
Coll Cibber leatherin 'round the bass
Wi' heavenward palms.

'Ae bardie toop wha's titled praise
Sin' my sad flittin' speelt the braes,
For greetin owre puir Sandy's waes,
And vengefu' bummin,
Shall e'en five quarters' poortith graze
Frae Southey's common,

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" E'en rhymin Rab, (and tak ye tent—
Fient haet o' sin the gawky meant)—
For giein the cherub choir a sklent
O' wistfu' ee,
Straught to the muckle deil was sent
Frae 's bended knee!

" 'But stan'! quo' Hornie, glowrin hard
On twa my switherin body-guard,—
The howff's owre fu' to tak a bard,
Forbye—d'ye min'?
This gied me just the ae good word
O' a' mankin'.

" 'Bring me wrang-thank, self-walin dizzards,
Wha gobble a' God's grace like bizzards,—
More ta'en wi' Christ as chief o' wizzards
Than mortals' savor,—
We'll hae fresh flints clapt i' their gizzards
Wi' sma' palaver.

" '*Ye twa*, wha this mad loun did yerk,
Hae shown vocation to my kirk!
I'se gie ye wages to your wark,—
Ye'll hae to spare!
But thou, stray cushat frae life's ark,
Come here nae mair!'

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"Then swift he claught ane by the nape,
That he for grace right fain did gape,—
Ae by the nether breeks he grape
And greetin' bore,—
Tap forrit back in Hell did leap,
An' steeked the door.—

"But fare you weel, guid bardie brither!
My thochts the day are 'mang the heather.
E'en tak my sense aboon the blether,
And dinna doubt,
Tho' not a canon a'thegither,
I'm no far out.

"The Beuk o' Life nae sinner sees;
Yet whyles, the bread o' life God gies;
I'm hopin yet for rest and ease
I' the lang hame,—
And somewhere down amang the B's
He'll find my name."

He passed unquestioned—for a manlier breast
The gods ne'er fluttered with poetic blood;
And one appeared whom youngsters better love—
A brain of iron and a woman's heart.
This for too much revealing in the flesh
(Which Ovid reckons Tantalus his crime)
Now masked his visage from o'er-curious eyes,
Scorning the past, the present, and himself.
He meant no pause, yet with averted face
He turned upon us when we spoke him fair,—
And these in my remembrance are his words:

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"Why do ye call me to the thoughts I hate—
To words that make me slave, more hateful still?
Our life is double; and the things we seem
Are masks of madness o'er our better selves.
Man's vice is outward—but the face is foul,
And were he ever dumb he still were true.
All sound of speech, brute, savage, civilized,
Blessing or curse, praise, wailing, thanksgiving,
Hath his own measure of hypocrisy,
Nor cries the babe but lisps the serpent hiss.
Hence!—Mask those shameless faces, turn your backs,
Stop your wide ears, pluck out those forked tongues;
The gods in everlasting silence dwell."

Who could be wroth at anger such as this?—
"O my sad Harold, do not part us thus!
We know, the east wind withered thee; the moon
Told every quarter on thy silver nerves.
The cloudy, drizzling climes which lubricate
In rich and sodden mass men's harsher brains,
Drowned thee in surges of loose-gurgling tears.
The dry and windy autumn afternoons
That give men quiet thoughts or touch their souls
At most with gloom congenial, burned thy life
With fever-madness, that must bathe itself
In alleys of the red-eyed, desperate poor,
Where crime grows rank from sweltering dangerous loves.
We knew thy weakness, and we own thy strength:
Thou canst not mask thee from a poet's eye."

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"Look on me then, thou bitter, prying fool!"
He said, and snatched the visor from his eyes;—
"Say, am I withered!—and this moanful harp—
What hope shall pitch it to a loftier key?—
Back to thy world! and on its longing hearts
This orbéd sorrow roll, that Atlas tires:
There's no eternity outjoys thine own.
Wide tho' the arc, the circle fills at last.
Children of angel loves, whose planet eyes
Reflect the glory closest to God's throne,
Sons of the Morning, whose old diadems
And breast-plates, in the heraldry of heaven,
Wear stars of the first lustre—constellations
More noble to these gaping sprites than all
The monarch's jewels to the peasant, sigh
While all they compass points to all they lack.
There is no speed, no lift of ecstacy,
Tho' 'twere from worms to angels in an hour,
Can catch the swift expansion of thy soul,
Or fill and cheer her ever-widening maw.
Life hath its tenor, whether damned or saved—
Its heaven and hell, exceptions to the rule.
Let Heaven deny it! To man's lofty hopes
The key-note of the universe is low;
The heaven of heavens at last is but serene,
And gods themselves, as the wide cycles tire,
Groan at the shrine of fate."—

And this was he
Who, parting nature, said 'I must sleep now!'—
I could but murmur, silence fits him best.

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He faded suddenly, replaced by one,
The wittiest (and the weariest?) of the bards,
Whose glittering javelin seldom brings the blood.—
O simple virtue, simple good and truth,
Ye need no polish in this wise old world.
A continent eye is more than beauty's shape;
An infant's voice outcries all orators;
And some brown rustic with his heart in his mouth
To face the panther crackling through the woods,
May stand by him to whom the Corsican
Unbonneted—the Bravest of the Brave.
Yet this was welcome for his critic skill,
And so I bade him,—but he answered straight:

"Doubt not with Pegasus to soar and sing,
Tho' forty critics catch him by the wing.
They mount behind, they take the seat indeed—
The critic stock now covers all the breed.
Time was, a poet in some modest part
Put forth his work, and stood behind his art,
A public caterer; but in letters now
The showman is the wonder of the show.
No more night sparkles with the royal stars
That lit the glory of those ancient wars;
No more the Tuscan palls the fiery noons
Where daylight shudders o'er his grim cartoons;
But stockless bards with but themselves to say—
Whose single study is the strangest way,
From nature's patient picture turn aside
To show their ass-ears thro' the lion's hide

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"And lo! what antics ask the public gaze,
And bid men wonder where they cannot praise!
One takes the mania of the ultra terse,
And strives to stuff whole chapters in a verse;
One strikes with lines unusual, short or long;
One goes all lengths; one spells his verbiage wrong;
One, sick for sonnets, half his breath resigns
To lace his aching ribs in fourteen lines,—
A hundred follies, empty of defence,
Since wit's first comfort is self-evidence,
And greatest poet has most common sense.

"These hold Art's temple for a jointed stock,
Where merit rests on merit, block on block;
Bard builds on bard, progressive, and the last
Is frieze or capital to poets past.
Ask not for Homer, or a Virgil crave;
These are too heavy for the architrave;
The site is occupied, and proudest bust
Must feel their bones between it and the dust.

"But lo! blind Homer plucked the meadows thro'
And missed the root which Shakspeare's tulip grew;
Strong Maro clambered to his lofty tomb,
And pulled the ladder up whereon he clomb,
Yet Dante's genius found the wing to rise
From Hell's cold bottom to the fiery skies,
And Milton following hath abundant room
With less of passion, but with grander gloom.

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"The mind's creations, falling to the past,
But make it fertile, like the mouldering mast.
Tho' out of nature first the poets grow,
They pass like seasons—they are nature now;
Nor lacks thine epoch of the poet's crown
But length of reach, and skill to pluck it down.

"Yet the time ripens: thro' the stagnant air
The sultry energies old laws declare.
There comes a shudder, and a tread of power,
As of some Cyclops groping for the hour.
A cloudy banner o'er the land unrolls;
A love electric weds the scornful poles;
And bolts down deeper than all foundings hurled,
Shall storm, astonish, and rebuild the world."

He passed like music, soaring but to die,
Singing the song of one that never comes—
The bard whose compass covers earth and heaven;
And softly gathered, with submissive look,
That courtier priest whose gloomed ambition still
Found place and patronage beneath his worth,—
And thus his Night-Thoughts waned in twilight-hopes:—

"With humble patience let me wait mine hour,
That strikes full soon, yet comes, alas, how late,
O'er days neglected, mercies misimproved!
Slow rise the compensations of our life—
So proved eterne, since compensation waits
To greet us in the seven-and-seventieth heaven.
There the fine madman who was wise on earth

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But to be wretched, ousts the shouldering brave
Whose dull head swaggered thro' the lucky world.
There they that labored thro' the heat of day
Get more than their one penny. There the saint
Who daffed the world aside shall truly learn,
But pure persuasions can give wisdom worth.
The martyr there, misguided tho' his zeal,
Shall pass rejoicing in the lofty faith
That could face death so early and so well.
There many a scholar and benighted bard,
(Unfit to wrestle with their brawling age,)
Shall front their recompense, when tasseled lords,
Who dropped their patronage like ill grudged alms,
Shall tell the precedent with humble looks,
And crave the shadow of the laurel leaves
To shield their dim eyes from the light of love"

Shade followed shade, some speaking, silent some.
'Twere a poor memory would remember all;
And better judgment some had closer scanned.
The peaceful bard of "Conversation" paused
A moment, dwelling on our party strifes:—

"The right hand is the husband of the left,
And men are male and female. Two great sects
(Whose difference clothes the fibres of the brain)—
Which stand asunder like magnetic poles,
Each poising other as the wave the trough,
Divide thy country, and the human race.
The one hath zeal, and sympathy, and skill;
The other patience, charity, and will.

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The one would do, while aught is to be done;
The other's impulse is to let alone.
One feels the burden of all human ill,
And doubts that folly doth his mission fill:
With this no edifice of splendid sin
Out-lives the question of its origin;
This haunts the past—its rights are founded there—
Nor sinks the robber in the robber's heir.
With that the past, escaping from our power,
Has left us but the duty of the hour."

(I clapped the speaker, for he pleased me well,
His platform fair and even; but at last
He used a shaky plank or two I fear.
I thought the lecture was at end. Not so—)

"Enlightning science and experience long
Show many a battle where both sides were wrong;
Hence prudent judgment to the last assures,
Your brother's reasons may be good as your's.
Then pause, consider, e'er you strip to fight,
The point in question may be black or white.
Blows cannot prove it; bid the foe half way,
And call it neither black nor white, but gray!
Peace is the end of policy, and life
Must eke in compromise, or end in strife."

Egad, quoth I, a democratic elf!
Here's *pax vobiscum* to the devil himself!

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Then came a mantled shade of Chivalry,
Which but for pride had been a gentleman.
His arms were folded, and his words were these:

"But that the past is sacred to the gods
Who made it what it is, I would regret
That wasteful fight—that war without a song,
Watchword, or battle cheer,—a victory lost,
By numbers blushing at a sterner foe:
And to what end?—brother on brother bent
To give the bondman what his zeal ne'er earned.
What's liberty to slaves? The brave go free
Tho' locked in gates of granite.—Better far
Have kept the law, and turned the Fugitive
With freedom's spleen ignited, like a torch
By northern breezes fanned, to fire the rest.
So had the problem wrought itself,—in blood,
But blood of them that felt the cause of war."

"Brother, (I said to him), be satisfied.
'Tis not the first time in this wicked world
That God's due justice into mercy melted,
Saving of noisome dogs,—in mouths of babes
Put utterances which should confound the wise,
And shame the pride and majesty of men."

He took some puzzled dudgeon from my words
And with his dubious comfort passed away.

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All these might I forget, but never him,
The martyr president of mine own land,
Whose mellow greatness filled the scene at last.

Unbent from worldly care, the father face
Had a large lustre, and the martyr crown
With its great ruby redder than heart's blood,
Perched an ungainly finish on his head.
Hung on his arm a pallid comely man,
With a sad calmness in his drooping eyes—
Hung as for life whereto his hand gave death.

"Hope of thy foes! (I cried)—a poet's heart
Who loves all truth, but for its beauty most,—
Who sees with many eyes—identified
In many-sided sympathy with life,
Mounts for the benison of thy single love
And unavoiding purpose. Speak to me!"—

"Sing the Republic's greatness: the wide courts
Where daylight freely shines; the vast o'erflow
Of uniform intelligence; the fame
That's compassed in a day o'er the broad lands
Where fiery hearts that know no master yet
Speak their free thoughts at will. Project thine age
Into the mellowing past, till greater loves
That can be just to chivalry conceive
The better greatness of a land all free!"

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Thus he: then I, who haply loved him well:—
"A land of villages and small ambitions,
Where spungy vice ranks office before art,—
Where genius sickens for the personal love
That princes love to give!—Were I the king,
All bards were pensioned, and thereafter all
Who ease our load with labor-saving jacks.
These traders bid the poet sell his piece,
And get his bread thereby; he cannot do it.—
When wild majorities are virtue-swayed,
(An easy matter when the devil's dead),
I shall write liberty the state's first good."

"My son," saith he, "the poor must work for bread.
Thou namest luxuries for later years."

But quick the younger cut his answer short:

"Behold the poet for a feast's tag end!—
When princes sup, and knights enlarge their feats,
And ladies listen gaily, thou, a toy,
With minstrel trick of rhyming out of head —
A fellow with an o'ergrown faculty,
Laureate, and cousin of the old king's-fool,
Shall be led in to cheer the noble rest,—
As much a slave, with little of true blood,
(Tho' children's children pull thy dog-eared fame)
As he who serves with napkin at his waist.

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"The bones of Earth have ached, her sickened maw
Its load cast up at human tyrannies—
Say slaveries rather, for so long endured.
Mothers who claimed their daughters' fair respect
Have knelt to frippery, heartless, flattered queens
Of half their years, and, winning a cold smile,
Given thanks would answer God. Gray headed men—
Expiring patents barely parchment worth,
Have crooked to beardless princes, without shame,
The knees grace never bent. Yea, manhood prime,
Whose jungle beard had foiled the tiger's paw,—
Whose breath in battle stormed the loitering gods
With curse fraternal,—whose half-acre breast
Had hurled thro' pillared corridors of throat
Command, the lion tan of his great eye
Staring straight on to see his words create,—
Strong as crude Ajax, with no need of strength,
For at his coming courage was like air,
And 'neath his gaze obedience was a joy,—
A king for crowns hereafter,—yet, all told,
Hath smirched his face with suppliance, while his boy
Might stare at something nobler than his sire,
All reverence shaming; this in lowering days
When liberty was skulking thro' the hills.
Yet one would talk of laureates and of knights,
Thro' bearded lips!—pensions and patronage!—
The man that in the presence of his child
Will bow the knee to any rank but virtue,
Genius or reverence, is a licking dog,
Unfit to leave his image in the world!

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"O Liberty, thou idol of the soul—
Burden of every prayer—the gold of gold—
Beauty's own beautiful—strength of the strong!
How many ages have been split with grief—
What proud hearts drowned in gall, to reach thy day,
When honest worth can spit on tyranny,—
When clear sane eyes can pierce the gloss of power,
And hate less than despise yon Gallic fiend
Whose broken body and dyspeptic blood
Vie with his conscience which shall wake him most!
And all this vantage one would trade away
For a king's ribbon 'round his showman's neck!"

"Hold! hold," quoth I: "haply some virtues stern
Must match the vices which that monarch rules—
The seething, yeasty universe whose budget,
Swoln with French millions, common sense divides
By twenty-five to make it solid pounds.
Tell, now: what kings, since Solomon and him
Who in a day built Tarsus and Anchialus,
Have left a living sentence? Name the king
Whose subjects' backs have borne an ounce the less
For his invention! Name the work of art,
Science, or any thing but foppery,
Till now the monarch writes his critics dumb!
Your heir apparent is no poet yet:
But this hath seen hard fare and heavy days."—

"Put brains into a king, and make a god.
This author writes his subjects—not himself."

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"His craft, quoth I, the art of multitudes,
Whose voice united drowns all single good."

"A multitudinous liar! Nay, shield him not—
The very utmost rascal of the world,
With bastard impudence, a thief of state,
A rawhide for lean apes and spiteful cats—
Vain, gibbering, mutinous convention.
Yet, will Hell's darkness make the devil white?

"Name him no longer in the martyr's presence—
The purest ruler yet. Go tell thy times
I have renounced the past. Let after years
Link Booth and Judas in the world's regard.
Here do I anchor all my faith in man,
Here where the lamb is leader of the lion,
Here where my heart, whose flutterings had out-worn
The pride of courage, such forgiveness split
As sire ne'er gave to son"—and the proud head
Fell on the patriot's breast—"Forgive me yet
Once more, O father, and have patience still
With an immortal beggar for thy love."

"Nay, nay!" the elder said, and his great lips
Sunk tremulous among the assassin's curls,
And his long arm upheld the yielding waist—
"Good cheer, my son"—and twinkled in his eye
It may have been a tear, or quick conceit
(Haply of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom);
"I loved thee ever—shall I leave thee now?"—
Then unto us, (the assassin on his breast:)

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"How long, alas, shall man mistake his greatness!
Scorning pure light in the artist love of shadows,
More glorying in the flash of devilish wings
Than patient virtue trudging safe to heaven,
And counting nobler the hot selfish brave,
Ditching in human flesh, than the sad monk
Who bridges o'er the wound: proud, eager slaves,
Whose courage scorns God's fear as a reproach!
O moaning bleak—O desert-like forsaken,
Unto their own eyes, are the hero hearts
Who lived not for their race! But all shall pass;
The Earth, all granite once, is flowering now;
And the day cometh—do thou help it on,
Brother shall be the word, and men shall smile
When superstition, drifting off the world,
Leaves peace for policy, and love for law."—

Then spake the younger, with a flashing gaze,
And the strange pair stood closer, hand in hand:
"E'er broods that peace shall swoop the hawks of war!—
Not with the Gaul—a race of alien blood,
Nor the long-suffering, ever-hoping Russ,
Nor goose Italian, in art dreams afloat,
But the bull Briton, with his English greed—
The languid nobles of ancestral courage,
Whose old cold pride our crest provincial cuts
With senior questions touching wit and will.
Ye heavens! I see it—that long prestige glares
On our quick eaglets in a Roman close!
Not with those 'pothecary stuffs—with nitre
By fiends first scraped, and welkin-vaulting bombs

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Wherewith a chemist's clerk might rip Achilles,—
I see the cold blanch of the sickening steel,
Skill, strength, and valor; chances are no more!
Stand to it, lads!—the reckoning is at hand!
Here is no holiday,—the cut-and-thrust
Of Cesar whiffled on these silen pikes!
Silence—or victory!—tho' the last man fallen
Speak the first word, to bid the skies farewell!—
And lo! methinks the old world flies the new.
Soft—do not cheer, for the last fight is o'er."—

E'en to his face whose fate of mortal man
Drew most of water from man's melting eyes,
I meant the youth somewhat,—for never yet
A braver died, or in the story books
For after ages put a fiercer look
Of raw and savage valor turned at bay,—
Count them from Hotspurs and Plantagenets
And all that knighthood on the shoulder clapped—
Back thro' Thermopylae, and o'er the pier
Where brawny Cockles, fighting for the bridge,
Made Tuscan plaudits match the cheers of Rome,
Than he. No rainbows blossom 'round his name—
A lightning etching on life's cloudy scroll,—
But the mad artist half of human kind
'Mongst whom I number still shall see him die,
And dying, not forget. But they were gone—
Gone up the heavens upon a rosy path
To where, no clouds about him, but the sheen
Of ancient honor, that hath question passed,
Full on his brow, the august Virginian

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Who names the capital of the western world
Stood calmly waiting. To our elder straight
He gave his breasted hand; the youth fell back,
As seemed his patron should not stead him there,
And near removed looked moodily upon.
Lo! from the skies, now mellow, blue and clear,
A wreath fell slowly as by idle hands
From th' empyrean dropt, as who should think
They meant to crown our soldier of the world
And Pater Patriae,—but, something strange—
Beyond the soldier to the martyr's crown
The light toy drifted, and a tiny cheer
Came down from infant voices in the air,
Singing how love is mightier than law,
The burthen still *Vicisti, Galilæe!*
'Till e'en the assassin smiled.

Hear me ye gods.
Whose ears should feed on humbleness and truth!
I have beheld the great whom ye have shown
With thankfulness; the best are mortal stuff:
But here I pick the fellow to my heart,—
The generous genius whose first thought forgave
All human difference,—him with the long arm
But formidable in the hug of joy
Wherewith he met his brother!—All men's peer
Yet willing listener to each nunkle's grief,
His genial satire told the royal height
Whence stooped the love imposture could not fool.

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IX.

I must not weary thee with all I saw,
For what detained me thou perchance had passed.
Doubt not, if e'er thou follow o'er my ground,
Thou'lt think the best part of the show forgot,
And ne'er so brave a tale in telling spoiled.

But now a sound, as the last trump were played,
Shattered the dreaming quiet. Flitting swift
The wandering hosts the ready champions met
In the two centers of a vast ellipse,
Whose gleaming tribunes showed above the crowd.

Long since I might have told thee, to his world
The native spirit clings,—nor grieved therefor:
All other worlds are imaged in thine own,
As other animals in man combined.
But there be angels of the universe;
Like time, no stay—like space, no home they know,
No kindred claims them; but from star to star
They wander, bright and paradisian birds,—
And when thou see'st one, hope for it no more.
And here was one of them. The lofty wings
(Which in her structure hold the place of arms)
Behind contained her like an open shell.
Her blood, if blood she had, was roses' wine,

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Which thro' her sides transparent softly warmed
The inside satin of her pinion's gloss.
Her blue eyes opened with a startled look,
Perchance compassion, touched by elements
More gross than her's. Wide was her range and high,
And deep as well, but soft her voice and low
From organs little used; her style subdued
And reverential, as in doubt of strength
In her to teach, or these to apprehend
The mysteries God alone is master of,
In illustration mete for finite gauge.
LOYOLA was her name—forever leal,
And safe for God, tho' on the utmost world.

Not such the other. With the courtly smile
That wins the hearer e'er the tale begins—
High confidence that courtesy may afford,
Her skirts drew tides behind her like the moon's.
Forever young she seemed, forever fair,—
Not with the youth and beauty of our world:
The glittering embers of immortal love,
Confest unenvied to the lord of Hell,
With battlous courage cheered her gallant eyes,
That men would die for, and be thankful damned.
She was a daughter of the earliest world,
And friendlier than the other seemed to us,—
Of earthlier substance moulded. Her lithe limbs,
With gold encircled, spurned the tunic short
Like a straight athlete's, and the naked arm,
Flung o'er her head that wore the morning star,
Held silence like a thunderbolt in hand.

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Yet not with pride unseemly: those who hear
Shall no vain pomp bewilder. To her grasp
All creeds of men for reference open lay,
Since mortals should be judges—whether claimed
As exhalations from the primal life,
Or dripping distillations from the next,—
The grimy heart-sweat and the poet dreams
Which tell the process of uncounted years.
There Sanchoniathan and Shastabah
I marked; Timæus of strange trinities;
Alkoran; Talmud, Mishna and Gemara,
Targum and Vulgate; Vedas; Zendavesta,
With notes canonic and apochryphal,—
And many a book whose title ne'er I heard.

There sat old fathers of philosophy—
Heads ripe and heavy, whose approving nod
Was like a province won—Time's referees,
Who hold all things to judgment long deferred,
And smile at last, that part must judge the whole:—
Hermes th' Egyptian, from whom Plato learned,
With Orpheus, stoned (not yet a martyr crowned);
Gautama, Zoroaster, and Confucius;
Antisthenes who leads the Cynics all;
Zeno with Stoics stern; Hermogenes;
Pyrrho who doubteth all; Democritus;
And Aristotle, handle of the rest.
There many a modern haply I beheld,
Whom time had been respectable without—
Blood-headed spouters who must vent or burst.
I saw Spinoza, Leibnitz, Hobbes, and Bayle,

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With Locke who doubts all these, and Stillingfleet
Cudworth, and hundreds more, commingled thick
With Rosicrucians and Theosophists,
Banians who slew no brute, Pricillianists,
Hermetics, Mystics, Gnostics, Epicurians,
With Whippers, Diggers, Jumpers—scaly shoals!

Among such craftsmen words were dangerous tools.
But thro' the hubbub now a clarion voice
Above all comers blows a challenge forth:

"I am Gladiola, Champion of the Damned,
The Love of Lucifer,—and teach that Hell
Is happy as the Heavens are, and more free!"

(So ruffling all the current of my blood,
I could but murmur 'Be there spirits damned?'
She heard and answered me:)

"That never doubt!
"Thine Earth hath one side yellow, one side black,—
One street holds madhouse, playhouse, church, and prison,—
Yea, thine own heart doth reach at saint and devil;
And that wild hymn whose diapason whirls
The clanging constellations 'round the heavens
Dozed with the murmur of the hiving bee,
The leap of cascades, and the laugh of children,
Hath its deep bass. The prattle of the babe,
That hath no meaning, compensates the roar
Of fiends who pierce the world, and ever scowl.
Yet Night hath stars to beautify her darkness;
And that profoundest compass of the song

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Hath fiendish joy and passages of peace—
Dreams like Elysium,—for despair itself,
Where thou wouldst faint and die like drowning bird,
Is the true element of many a spirit,
Whose music is thy harmony reversed,
Whose love is hatred, and whose bliss perdition.

"Hell is by precedent. Your poet storms,
To hell condemned by second-best applause;
But the long-bonded prisoner, tried at last,
Shall find a heaven escaping without praise
In two poor words—the sweetest e'er he heard:
Not Guilty, by the foreman of the box.
There is no absolute, in Hell or Heaven,
But waits on Time for judgment or revenge.

"God moveth all, yet all things doth he judge:
Thou canst know this—guilty alike and guiltless?
Then may'st thou know the damned without regret,
Without repentance, and beyond all fear,
As the best saved in Heaven;—a mystery."

LOYOLA:

"O hear her not! It is the siren's voice;
And they that listen sink beneath the sea.
Her damning charge is but too plausible,
With strokes oblique that ghastly gashes hew,
Yet never shall life's citadel come near.
She can but truckle to your finite lack,
And urge conviction sweet to finite pride;
While truth omniscient and all-reticent

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Hath no such shaft complete and perfect proof.
Beyond thy thought its wide circumference bends
God's justifying, into ways obscure—
Its bearings infinite, past finding out."

GLADIOLA:

"Nay, friends, have patience: I deny her not.
No spirit would be false. But truth is dual,
Seen true and false from two ends of the world,
Potent alike. This too is mystery.
Yet heat and cold are creatures of the blood,
As light and dark are creatures of the eye;
So joy and anguish are the fools of use;
So truth is falsehood to a deeper centre;
So disobedience keeps a higher law;
And all things true to Heaven are false to Hell.

"There is no contest between good and ill.
Each is for all, each compensating all.
Hating or loving, tho' the Devil reigned,
The universe must balance as it is.
One stern equator girdles every world,
And be it's tropics wider than the spoom
Of wildest comet that thro' frighted night
E'er whisked its crimson tail, it keeps midway.
Where'er thou dwellest is the centre true.
Above, archangels, far in dreamy lights
That thwart the empyrean of the blest,
Call thee a worm, yet cry, 'O God, how long?'
E'en to the end. Downward, no beast so small
But some beast lives upon it. Infinite,

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Infinitessimal alike claim all.
Whate'er the compass of the gamut be,
The key-note and the tenor still are thine.

"Then hear me, mortals; for the depth of Hell
My wandering lot hath tested, while of her
The paths of disobedience are untried,
Her judgments partial, and of half conceit,
Which deems her deeds original; nor hears
Her ear the song that good and evil sing.

"We hold, this mystery is born of love
Fighting necessity for mortal good:
But fate forestalls the gods."

LOYOLA:

"Believe her not—
And stay your judgments for my loyal plea.
God is the reason of the universe
To reasons all divine—the fate of all:
Not so to ye. The gods believe in God,
And souls divine;—and fate and God are one
To love and virtue,—unconditioned law.

GLADIOLA:

"Yet list the nuptials of Omnipotence;
Hear ye the bridal of eternal Love.

"E'er perfect Love and perfect Power were wed,
A voice of woe from beings unconceived
Forbade the bans. The high-priest dropped the book—

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High-priest Necessity, and from the steps
Of Fate's stern temple spake to the unborn:
'Say will ye rest, ye unbegotten hosts,
In your dark possibility, unproved,
Or with a weird unrest behold the light?'
'Light, light,' they cried—'light up the wondrous world!
'Yet wherefore shall we suffer? for thou knowest,
'When weds Omnipotence the perfect Love,
'Necessity is father of our woe,
'Else sin and sorrow are the tyrant's joy.'
Then sighed the priest, as the bride's father sighs
At birth or wedding, saying: 'The wave must plash
'When the deep rights itself—the poising deep
'That keeps the globule true. O seed of gods!
'Ye ask the blessing that shall make ye curse,
'For your first vision shall be nakedness.
'Ye would behold the gods, and pine with envy
'Ye would be souls, and lo! one perfect soul,—
'For the world's guidance claims a single will.'
Ne'erless the unborn the colloquy kept up:—
'Why should we suffer?'—'Ye are finite all.'—
'Are the gods happy?'—'They are infinite.'—
'Shall we wax happier?'—'What can be shall be.
'Say how ye may be happy, and *amen*.'—
Then all was silence; none had remedy;
And from the book the high-priest thus pronounced:
'Ho! be there wedded in our silent house
'The agonists, Omnipotence and Love!
'Beauty be all their dower; and this the fee
'To Fate's high-priest: the finitude of Man.'

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"Then shaped Omnipotence the perfect sphere.
Love was the solace of his toil, till Time
Bade human judgment sit upon the work,
And dare no atom's variance while this Love
Should cool the hissing journals of the world.

"Now answer mortals: In your test of life
Did not felicity transcend the law?
Or could ye ask of virtue at her best
More than a soul serene?
Behold your world;—
Change her first law, and compensation next.
All creatures vary from the legal type
For variance mainly,—yet no tender spot
But Love shall bid some buckler of defence
Forgive Power's frolic skill? And one-eyed sages
Have thumbed the bones of the dried skeleton,
And praised the cord, pivot, and cylinder,
The compensation of each vital force,
The various beauty of all living things,
The split hoof and the solid, to one end,
The mottled, ringed and streaked but for show;
Yet in the presence of a mottled spirit—
The fool, the mad,—or grievous providence
Of witchcraft, battle, earthquake, quite forgot
Their previous method, and this inference missed:
The moral perfect as the physical:
The whole a musical sublime machine,
Whereof Sir Devil is the balance-wheel,—
But ever croaked of evil men and times,

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And coming troubles: would the coal hold out
With all the wood cut off? the growing race,
It must o'erfill the lands? and evil wills
Shall mar the beauteous plan?—forgotten quite
The perfect lever and the guarded brain,
The changing blood and wonder-working eye.

"Is Earth our mother drunken? and what botch
Hath boxed her widely oscillating poles?
Lo! as she shifts her belly in the sun,
Forever winking slow with night and day,
She winds the weird ecliptic's green and white
Across her zones, and says to ye and me,
'Eternal variance is both just and lovely.'
She bids us up and down across our line,—
Clear out our cells, renew and change our flesh,
And not, like some whose blood did ne'er boil o'er,
Still wear the same old fat for forty years.—
A hundred passions held in leash like hounds
May yield serenity; but perfect joy
Slips all their collars, and forgets the law.

"There is a dream of progress in the race,
Till storm and passion shall have quit the world,
And all is uniformity and peace.—
Who art thou, at whose coming Earth must change?
What is reform but discontent? What zeal
But God insults? Ye with diviner calm,
Side with the gods, and let the world alone!—

"I love their brawl—staccato to the tune,
But grant their prayers, ye heavens, the song were done.

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"What! Drown the devil and set all hell afloat,
Make earth all sunshine and the race all saints,
Pluck thorns from roses, venom from the snake,
Acid from lemons, from the sugar sweet,
Let fire not burn, rope hang, nor passion kill,
Eliminate all passions of the sex,
And with hot pinchers pluck the sting of death?
God's praise! I like things better as they are."

LOYOLA:

"Ah, what a mass of mummy-powder brain
Is laid in lavender of this conceit:
To pay life's debt by siding with the gods!
No laborers these, but partners of the House!—
Who courts philosophy, despising toil,
Need ask no windfalls out of Fortune's lap.

"All ye have seen the farmer: on his breast
The sack of yellow grain, while the soft mold
Yields to his laden tread. In the dark days,
His scraggy besom scourged the rough barn floor
For the last seeds, clean winnowing hand to hand;
He locked his bins, he fought the thieving mice,
And snipped his baby's ear for thimblefulls
Spilt in the granary;—yet behold him now!
His breast thrown out, his eye in keen advance,
No doubts upon his brow, with eager waste
He showers his liberal fistfulls o'er the glebe,—
With every fling gives God Almighty thanks,
And prays the harvest with his brawny arm.—
Shall not his judgments tally with his works?"

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GLADIOLA:

"All days are judgment days. Best saved may fall,
Else how shall freedom be their boast above?
Or how from heaven did angel e'er descend?
Probation is eternal tho' redeemed.
Christ ever lives, and ever dies to save.
No line divides God's purpose from mine own,
No bolt locks down the damned but their own will.
Be their's the will of God—nor gates of brass
In posts of adamant more firm, Heaven's key
O'erhangs each mortal's breast, and he may pass
What ward he will, and by the same return."

LOYOLA:

"O wretched sophistry! a dual truth?—
Be thy probation endless; yet the damned
Are damned no less, tho' damned of their desire,—
Nay, doubly damned in their self-sacrifice.
Thou hast probation, mortal, she hath none.
Tho' in thy folly thou hast planted causes,
Be wise in time, no fruit need trouble thee.
Back o'er the past, where thou hast sown thy future,
Christ strews his ashes, and the crop is dust.
Strike out once more: the furrows gape for seed,
And errors past compost new-sown resolves.
But on her brow is writ *eternity*.
Hell's gates precede her wheresoe'er she goes."

GLADIOLA:

"Crowd me the oak tree back into the acorn,
And gather up the songs of all its birds

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From out the hearts of children who shall sing
In choirs immortal, and *I* will redeem
Thee and my race from the least word that's spoken!
The words I utter shake the universe;
And man's redemption still precedes the deed."

LOYOLA:

"And all the past shall clutch him unforgiven?
And all his sins cloud his immortal life?"

GLADIOLA:

" What dost thou mutter! All that live shall die,
In Earth, or Hell, or Heaven. Within all form
A finer spirit grows, and death sets free.
All life is mortal: death is still to come,
Flapping his wings (white inside, black without)
At shortening intervals, till death and life—
The twins of nature, as the night and day,
Or charge and discharge of God's beating pulse,
Shall make one being in the balanced soul.
Of life immortal sayst thou?—Never more
Shall the wise heart of mankind breathe a prayer
For life immortal. O'er my tired brain
Come, thou sweet death, with murmurs of the sea—
Come with cool ocean gurgles in mine ears,
And the cool blinding swell above mine eyes,—
Come ye sweet waves, at circling intervals,
To wash this finite, weary record out,
And lap me in the luxury of death.

" Yet the last spirit in man's seed convolved
Is but a powerless vassal, as the first."

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LOYOLA:

"His power who knoweth? God hath bid him go;
And let him answer if he can or no."

GLADIOLA:

"God hath all power; yet man shall bear command!
Poor fool, he must do that he doth."

LOYOLA:

"Thou liest,
Tho' thou said'st truly! Only will is his;—
The after-thought was borrowed from the Fiend
By thy rash grandsire in the field of Eden."

GLADIOLA.

"Ah well-a-day! we will not listen now
The weary legend of our Adam's fall:—
'Tis a divine significance—the eldest
Of mortal wit. From where bald Caucasus
Pillars the gleaming north, to where the Arab,
Like the sand shifting, strikes his nomad tent,—
From where the blue waves mock the splitting lips
Of Tantalus, to the stone-solemn eyes
Of Egypt's sphinx whose wide and breeze-blown temples
Catch at the ingenuities of life
Unutterable, that sombre gospel held:
Man's lapse from brute completeness to the spleen,
The aspiration and the longing hope
Of a fragmentary God. Or say'st thou fallen?
From the ox eye, the flesh that food aye fatted,
Up to this longing soul? Would'st thou he were
Chief brute again, and God's law all intact?—
Lo! the cracked crystal hath the iris' hope.

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"We hold, transgression kept a higher law.
Man's right was temporal—of law created;
But right eternal, wherein God is just,
Is love-born policy—persistent force,
Warring necessity for mortal good.
Herein th' observance and the breach of law—
The sin and penalty, are good alike."

LOYOLA:

"None but the devil saith man's fall was wise;
While all but he forget the holy joys,
The strong intelligence man might have gained
By the true culture of his pristine mind.—
No good computes itself: omniscient Christ,
The man unfall'n, ne'er reasoned to the soul,—
And virtue's prince ne'er questioned human will.

"Fall'n into greatness!—ah, look back in books
Of God's remembrance for thy proper race—
The lost ideal of the perfect world,
E'er sin had struck her, like a wandering slug
That system never owned, and through the skin
Her level strata thrust like broken bones.
'Twas this made Earth breed thistles,—set on fire
Her leaping veins, and lifted Nemesis
To poise the compensations. But for this,
The globe were sound and meaty as a nut,
And temperate peace had strolled her sunny fields.

"Yea! would man never in retorting glass
Had seen God's image, or on life's steel back
Caught his own shadow passing o'er the soul.

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To be, to do, to love—these serve no more:—
How the Life-giver lives in the life given,—
Where ends the human, and divine begins,—
Where mortal lust to love immortal burns,—
These are his cares.—Yet lives eternal law!
And far beneath it soars the human will
With pride and freedom ample to obey!—
What tho' man mounted to the throne of God
To learn that law and breach of law are good
Alike, and alike evil? Never for him
Can vice become a virtue. His true food
Is ever near, and simple. Give him drink
Of mellow lake-water, or from the rills
Of fractured crystal from his mountain springs.
Who ever drank this gross and running brine
Of shoreless ocean, but did thirst the more?

"Speak not of evil as the sweet or bitter,
Nor value all things by an appetite.
Hast thou no shame? or knowest thou what shame is?
It is not weakness,—for it might do better;
It is not cowardice,—this were a comfort;
'Tis the demeaning of the soul's ideal,—
A thing beneath true pride,—that gives offence
To all true majesty,—the frown of God.
Lo, in the centre of mine upright heart
I could wear iron for immortal years,
And deem it pleasure, in the will of God.—
Virtue's excess no compensation fears

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"And wilt thou murmur at the lot of man?
Measure his wants by the great house he builds;
His needs by that small wing wherein he dwells.
Con his estate throughout, and his adjuncts
Lack nothing but the faith that nothing lacks."

GLADIOLA:

"Think'st thou to 'scape me in a fog like this?
These are not youth that listen. Say thy best!—
Evil is good, or Satan reigns supreme.—
I charge thee answer, or be mute henceforth:
Is all as God would have it?—aye or no!"

LOYOLA:

"Not from a past of utter nothingness
Are these worlds made. Their essence is eterne,—
An essence negative, the foil of God,
His anvil and his iron which he beats,
And hath inertia only to God's foe.
His toil, his rest, proclaim its heaviness.
It hath no fate, no energy, no laws,
But as he gives them,—yet it is his foe;
What tho' concocted to organic life,
Instinct, nay, reason of thy proudest pitch,
Not yet his friend, to side with God and good,
But heavy, carnal, enmity with him.

"Deep in this negative is evil born—
Subjective conscience, all accountable
For man's first fall; here lies his need of grace
From God's august and righteous government.—

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Count not your orgies and your devilish mirth
Of God's inspiring as those anthems are.
Left to yourselves, untrammeled, unredeemed,
Ye are the waste and desert of his realm.
Nought hath he in ye but the breath ye breathe,
Nor aught but grace in us, O God our praise!"

GLADIOLA:

"Is Hell that blot upon the Lord's remembrance?—
E'en as he made us,—as a willful child
Depicts his crooked image on a slate,
He wanton spits on us and wipes us out!

"Speak'st thou of pride, and might be thus put down?
Am I an alien in the parceled world?
Is not life's central law the right to live?—
Tho' naked thrust into the groping dark,
There's something in me the gods dare not laugh at—
A consanguinity that turns their edge.
I am not frightened, but account myself
Honest as they that sent me. Yea! this brain
Wide bilging, muscled like Jove's armorer's arm,
Accounts her labors sacred as the hills,
And fronts the smooth brows of the sauntering gods
Whose wits are by inheritance, unashamed,

"Yet had I hoped that through the elements
The might of God put forth the wish of love
That all things might be happy;—tho' we tire
Of all our loves, as children of their toys,
That God would love with constancy—hate none,
Nor wrench our patience with imperial sneers."

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LOYOLA:

"God RULES the world—his majesty for all,
His love for whom he loves.—In the mute heavens
Repellant, lonesome, and unsocial stars
What years on years have rolled and spoken not,
And these are fresh and green; while comets wild
Look like thine eyes—or hell!"

GLADIOLA:

"I had thought love
Too great for majesty; that pride and hate
Were things of rivalry and equal blood;
That God would make all happy if he could,—
For so would Satan, mounted on God's throne.
Pain is the sole and universal foe.

"And since we are unhappy, I had sought
Necessities which hinder God's good-will,
And thought I found them. Squatting on the sands
The Sphinx hath whispered to my wandering heart:

'I KNOW A HOUSE OF COMMON FARE,
WITH PRIVATE FRONT AND PUBLIC REAR;
TOO GREAT FOR GODS, TOO SMALL FOR THEE;—
GO 'ROUND MY HOUSE OR SWALLOWED BE.'

"She filled me with compassion for the gods
Who made me god of finite attributes;
She spake of lone complacence and self-love
In one Almighty,—a sublime compare
Of what is with what might be—deep content

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With something better than all-nothingness,
And barren chaos in the night o'erwhelmed.
And the gods answered from their cloudy seats:
All but our thrones we'll give thee: thou must know
We are the gods—yet shall there be no slave,
And man's first thought shall be, that he is free:
His pride shall swell, till closes Reason's eye,
With this divine delusion of free will,
'Till he shall know the law was for his good,
Its breaking and its keeping to one end.

"Strange, that the heavens must worship God for power,
And only Hell can credit him with love!"

LOYOLA:

"Ye know yourselves god-free and god-defiant:
It is enough: your sins are self-condemned.
What child of God thro' white eternal years
Shall in his bosom wear the bitter jest
That this high conscience, which can beard the Highest,
Is a divine delusion?—cheating whom?
Not ye who teach it; surely not our Lord.
This falsehood, like the vice it seeks to cover,
Is of hell-birth, authority and end."

GLADIOLA:

"And thine, fair jester—what a jest is thine!
Survey, thou say'st, the future's grassy meads:
All thine—take, have thy will: but when Time's scythe
Turns grass to hay, lo! all falls unto God,—
His is the harvest home. O simpleton,

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My sense to trust! My sun goes 'round the world!
All drunken ravings are original!—
Conscience a fool may vaunt; but reason's voice
Is the last cry of cumulative man.

"Our words are equal, like the balanced sea;
Yet I am happier, for my course is free."

LOYOLA:

"Say'st thou thou'rt happy? Never tell it more!
Back to thy fiends, all haggard with despair,
And teach thy victims that the woes they feel
Delusions are—as conscience and free will!

"I curse thee not, O sister—I would bless thee;
But upon him thy Lord, thy evil love,
Him who deceived thee, taught thee this deceit,
Mountains on mountains pile, and let my curse
Shine on the summit like a blazing cross."

GLADIOLA:

"O name him not, whom thou canst never know!
Hadst thou been nurtured in the court of heaven
A hundred youths and ages—old in change,
Yet changes all in virtuous duteous modes,
While far beneath thee in untraveled realms
Thou saw'st the possible of great despair,
Th' accomplishments of darkness, the far depths
Of counterpoising evil, wouldst thou not
Have sought to know how deep the ill might be?
So he did: had he done it not, e'en thou
Had done that for him which sufficeth all,
And crowns his brow with forlorn empery.

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"Whate'er the soul conjectures must be proved.
Man must believe in hell, or make it; devils.
Or turn to devil himself. Sounding these depths,
He stumbled out of Eden. The first born
Of woman slew his brother: in his breast
Was writ the history of the angel war
When Lucifer went down. And hear, O hear,
Ye fates and elements—some damnéd shore
Shall show the record of that pride and sorrow—
Foot-prints like mine, quick stamped in molten glass
Where that whipt spirit fled along the waves,
Or by thy tattered heart, O Titan pale,
I'll make that history *prophecy!*"

[Tears, hot tears,
Scalding swoln cheeks of love and bitter hate,
Fell for the angel who had split Heaven's host,
And in the starlight, with invisible lips,
Had wooed and won her when the world was young.]

LOYOLA:

"Lost! lost, O sister—In the lowering future
I see thy pale cheeks flicker in the shade,
Darker and darker, from the Lord receding."

GLADIOLA:

"Lost? lost sayst thou, with half the world in hand?
Perchance still worthy of an idler's search."

LOYOLA:

"We shall grow brighter with the rolling years."

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GLADIOLA:

"There must be darkness that the light may shine;
And blessing are the fewer to be greater.
'Tis our repulsion holds your host in heaven;
And to destroy us splits your host in twain.
The nether-half is hell, tho' 'twere of Heaven.
Hell must be full, or Heaven would empty be;
For th' universe must balance like the sea.

"Mortals, remember me!—No mortal yet
Hath struck so deep in life as I, for truth.
She sues your consciousness; yet whose the thought
But mine hath mingled with? Was't Minotaurus'?
Mermaid's? Hermaphroditus'? or whose was't?
So little fear was in me, but to know,
I would have grown the sister of a beast.
Yea, with a serpent thicker than mine arm
I did entangle me, and fell asleep.
Nor yet repent I. On dark river banks
Of Satan's realm, where fiery forges glow—
A land of beauty tho' a land of shadows—
A land of red and black—contrition fierce,
Where tall volcanoes lift their sheaves of fire
And shake their golden grain to the grim fields,
I yet shall greet ye, where your peering eyes
Shall mark in crucibles of whitest heat,
Urged by the sighs of nature, the thick dregs
Of life's solution growing clear at last."—

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LOYOLA:

"Mortals, remember her! and this beside:
The world of genius by the world of virtue
Must be contained and chastened. These bold thoughts,
Which seek life's source and its significance,
Are for diversion good, so ye come back
From hopeless infinite as hopeless all
Thro' reason's strength, to lean upon the faith
In CONSCIENCE as God speaking face to face.
Reason for aye on innocence falls back.
Rapt orators, swoln with their vast conceits,
Key their proud arches with 'the poet saith,'
Which settles all; and speculators lost
Chase up the rills of childhood's prattling talk,
Whose waters trickle near'st the fountain head.
Unto this presence reason is a toy,
And, out of the Christ virtue, mockery all.

"How God and man are mingled, think no more.
How love and power are wedded, think no more.
Life hath the primal mystery for all;
It hath it's sorrows. God himself hath grieved
Coming too near your world. Yet, freed at last,
Virtue may conquer suffering,—but remorse
Renews the grief that patience had outworn.—
Be your law temperance—your portion peace!
And welcome, ever, to the better world!"

So paused the conflict; and the lists were cleared.
Had I been umpire of the joust thus far
I had decided: give the devil his due,
He shall be poor at last. Of this anon.—

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Now with the Florentine:—Ye jovial cits
Who grace with convoy of your pleasure craft
This preparation of mine admiral
For deeper seas, the sounds of Time are past,
And yonder spreading booms the eternal main
Wild and uncharted. Ye whom doubts assail
Turn quickly home; I seek another world
As he from Palos. I would see the crypts
Of Satan's kingdom; I would hear his voice
Who claims half empire of the universe,—
The longest wing of heaven, the brightest crown,
Who, ever vanquished, fighting as he falls,
Still dreams himself immortal. Ye that will,
Forsake your cockle shells and climb our side.—
Shake out your sails, my clear eyed Genoese!
The night comes down, the deck begins to bend,
And the wind bides the venture. Think no fear!
Tho' our white crescent canvass hook the waves
E'en as the mad moon in the second watch,
Bayed by November's dogs, with sidled horn
Turns on the headlong clouds, yet think no fear:
Think of the recompense of your return
With ingots rough, and spoil of fire-plumed birds,
And brackish tidings picked from savage shores;
Think of the pageant that shall gild old Seville—
The kerchiefed balconies, the process gay
Of mounted knights, and gonfalons, and music
Pitched to the compass of our mounting fame
By swoln-eyed buglers, striding thro' the dust,
Crazing the heavens with their obstreporous brass.
Shake out—shake out—I pine for the deep sea.

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NOTES.

"—the pictures of the Father-house—
Wainscotted windows looking out of life." Page 48.

A suspicion occurs to me that this idea has been expressed before. I shall claim it until I am better informed; but I mention the suspicion as a text.

There are few authors not liable to the charge of plagiarism. It is impossible that a writer should either read all that is written, or remember all that he reads; and critics who have read most themselves are most charitable to writers in this respect. I could collect several hundred instances of this misfortune from authors of high repute, commencing with the highest.

Errors of composition seem to deserve a less ready forgiveness, as they apparently impeach an author's care and conscience,—when in fact they do neither. The most careful scrutiny has been at fault. The "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard," by Thomas Gray, has been pronounced the most perfect composition in our language; it certainly is a holy and a glorious work, sufficient for one man's immortality, and it gives evidence in almost every part of a polishing which, by ordinary hands, must have worn away the original features of the piece; yet in this short poem of 128 lines there are two grammatical errors: one in the twelfth, and the other in the twenty-first stanza,—the nominative in each case differing in number from the verb. To miss these errors is to commit them again. Both Pope and Byron are liable to a similar charge; and Shakspeare, either accidentally or designedly, is more liable than they. Macauly has four incorrect sentences in succession. Even the Liturgy has a singular noun governing a plural verb, tho' it is heard devotedly every Sunday. If I have erred in these three thousand lines, let him that is without sin cast the first stone at me.

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" U was the humorous lubber of the book,
A jovial savage, of all heaven cast out,—
Whereby no Dutchman hath admittance yet." Page 57.

I think my brethren of the Reformed Church will forgive this expression when they look closely for the causes of their dislike at the word *Dutch*,—a dislike arising, I believe, from considerations rather esthetic than historical: the word is an unfortunate combination of letters as applied to anything of reverence or dignity.

In 1854, James Munroe and Company, of Boston, published for me a treatise on the poetical or suggestive powers of the different sounds represented by the different letters of our Alphabet. It was little noticed, except by curious scholars, and I am too weary of all controversy to revive it now; but there is in press a work by Stephen Pearl Andrews, Esq., of New York, in the second volume of which, he promises me, my essay shall have justice. I understand a portion of his work to be devoted to the origin of language, and a theory of a universal language. But pertinent to the citation above, I will propose that the offensiveness of the word *Dutch* comes partly from the mal-suggestion of the letters *tch*, which is a filthy, contemptible consistency, as in *bitch*, *ditch*, *itch*, *smutch*, *botch*, &c.,—and mainly from the inappropriate use of the vowel *u* flat, which I have thus characterized in the anonymous treatise above mentioned:

" U.—This is a huge, lubberly, blubbering, blundering dunderhead, a numb-skull and a dunce; ugly, sullen, dull, glum, rugged, clumsy, dumpish, gullable, lugubrious; a mumbler, a stumbler, a grumbler, a grunter, a fumbler, a thumper, a tumbler, a nudge, a trudge; a lugger, a tugger, a juggler; he is up to all manner of bulls; a fusty, musty, crusty, disgusting brute, whose bowels are guts, whose ears are lugs, whose nose is a snub, whose teats are dugs, his head a mug, his hat a plug, his victuals grub, his garments duds, his child a cub. At his best he is bluff, gruff, and blunt; " his doublet is of sturdy buff;" he drubs you with a club, or a slug, or a nub, or a stub, or a butt; always in a muss, or a fuss, he is sure to be jugged; and when you call him a grudging curmudgeon he gulps up ugh! fudge! He has some humor, more ugliness, and no delicacy whatsoever."

I think if my Reformed Church friends will carefully consider the above as it is intended—that is, as giving the poetical suggestiveness of the sound of the vowel *u*, short, they will discover one reason of their dislike for the word *Dutch* as a religious denomination, and readily forgive my chaffy charge that there are no Dutch in Heaven. The word is essentially *slang*, and altho' capi-

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tal in its place, like saur kraut, it smells too loud for the ambrosia at a feast of the gods.

One of our authors once said to me: "this 'suggestiveness' is mere fancy, except when it is onomatopy." Very well. If a man thinks *froth* a good name for lead, or *tub* a good name for an icicle, God help him. He may be a wise man; but he shall not marry my daughter. He may think the east wind as pleasant as the west; I doubt that a rhinoceros ever appreciated the difference.

"Astrologers—no man could tell their tale," &c. Page 58.

Of all sciences Astrology is that least cultivated; in fact hardly five men in any generation know what it means. Yet in all past ages have been a few who felt and observed that the planets tell upon our destiny through natural laws,—and it was always to be known that those few were men profoundly pious. It were strange indeed if the stars that hold our globe to its orbit did not send their influence to us. Paracelsus held that without a knowledge of the stars no physician is complete.

If my reader would try a single exercise in Astrology in its grosser form, let him take up biography, and notice how strong the chances are that speculative melancholy will be born, in our latitude, between the tenth of November and the twenty-fifth of February, and that military enthusiasm will be born between the first of July and the twenty-fourth of August. Let him contrast the British or American Poets with the Marshals of the French Empire—remembering that many things besides the date of birth are to be considered in astrological calculations. There is one kind of melancholy that is affected by the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Libra, another by the meeting of Saturn and the Moon in Scorpio, another by Saturn culminating, with Mars in the fourth house, and so on. A physician ignorant of the mental influence of the Moon is simply a charlatan, whose proper college is the madhouse.

Perhaps I err in speaking of these things here,—but if anything should make a philosopher angry it is that ridicule which confronts those sciences requiring so long life to their popular justification. I hope to have some success in my lifetime, without sacrificing the truth.—If my reader would approach this subject seriously let him consult Sir Christopher Heidon, Cardan, Melancthon, and so on to Garcæus, Pirovanus, Bellantius, etc.

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"Shall greet a Christian in the man Christ-like." Page 16.

The gap between the Church and the World is closing up. A spirit of concession, advantageous to both, is yielding on the one hand its rugged literalism, and on the other confessing that the man who denies Christ, in the right acceptation, is no gentleman. The former sees much in profession, the latter sees all in practice; yet both are coming to see that they have the same brain and the same evidence, and that while the practice of religion can never be gainsaid, the profession of religion may be a question of policy or taste. For some time past this has been a very delicate topic, and the dread of it has sapped the virility of literature,—for a work of art that is void of the religious element lacks of the best genius what time lacks of eternity; but be the word spoken, and the spell broken, and man shall no longer say to his brother "I am holier than thou." When the zealous professor shall say to the man of the world "I believe *so*, and *so*,—" as if his belief were a part of his duty, the other shall answer, "brother, I believe thou dost: so be it unto thee,"—and arm in arm they shall go up to the house of God, and go early if they would sit through the service, for the church will overflow.

"Wax, latin—holy haberdasherie," &c. Page 59.

I trust Catholics will see no ill in what little humor there is in these lines. I have ever felt the profoundest respect for the Catholic Church from an aesthetic standpoint. There never was a more contemptible issue than that raised by the Native American party. To avert an anticipated or imagined attack upon our liberties, that party would ignore the vital principle of our government; an expedient very like that of a Hibernian I knew. One Paddy says to another:

"Dinnis, supposin you was on a rock in the middle of th' ocean, a thousand miles from shore; and the seas was a ragin, and the billo's was a roarin; and ye had'nt a thing in life to take an observation wid but an empty bottle o' whishky,—how would you come to land?"

"A thousand miles from shore!"

"Yis."

"An' there was'nt a dhrop in the bottle!"

"Divil a sup!"

"And how would I come to land!"

"Yis."

"Be gob I'd make a dive for it!"

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'Son of a land that 'neath the tropic shakes," &c. Page 45.

"It was in Egypt that the morose discipline of Asceticism took its rise; and it is observable that that country has in all times, as it were by an immutable law or disposition of nature, abounded with persons of a melancholy complexion, and produced, in proportion to its extent, more gloomy spirits than any other part of the world. It was here that the Essenes dwelt principally, long before the coming of Christ."—*Mosheim*, Vol. I, p. 196.

"But soul is not the gods: the gods deny it." Page 33.

That is, if they say anything about it. Our widest circle cuts the centres of the gods, but not their circumference; and by so much as their circumference outreaches mine, do I here circumfer the transcendentals!

"With bonnet cocked and tartan to the breeze." Page 64.

Burns was a man of too liberal ideas to be very fond of the plaid. He wears it in his apotheosis as a reminder of his country, far away.

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TO BE CUT

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